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John Macklin
OUT OF THIS WORLD

ACE BOOKS
A Division of Charter Communications Inc.
1120 Avenue of the Americas
New York, New York 10036

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An ACE STAR Book
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Printed in the U.S.A.

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THE ELUSIVE GHOST OF EDITHA

It's just over twenty years now, since I visited the Berkshire village of Hurley to see something I doubt can ever be surpassed in the annals of either archeological or psychical history. For Colonel Charles Rivers-Moore's famous and picturesque country estate was up for sale and it had been quite rightly described by the real estate company as "a small country estate of great historical significance."

Yet, my visit there for my newspaper had nothing to do with the sale. Even though it was the sort of home that many of us dream of owning, it was also the sort of place—with its twenty acres of landscaped gardens and orchards—that I knew I could never afford in a million years. I went there simply because the Rivers-Moore home was then the most remarkable of all England's thousands of haunted houses.

With dozens of other inquisitively inclined people and a handful of what were obviously prospective buyers, I explored the haunted terraces, examined secret passages and for a few moments wallowed both in history and in mystery.

In one vault which had only recently been discovered, one was able to lift the crumbling wooden trap and stare at the bleached bones of a centuries' old man, whose ghost had led to the discovery of his long for-

gotten tomb. Another tomb was that of a monk who had been accidentally buried alive—his twisted and contorted skeleton still showed the anguish and terror he must have experienced. And yet another tomb was that of an actual giant!

And running beneath all this was the winding labyrinth of a subterranean passage that led to the very floors of an eleventh century chapel . . . along which the ghosts had often been seen to walk.

They were the restless ghosts, the wandering spirits that had haunted this estate which had become known as Ladye Place for almost a thousand years. And then shortly after my visit there, something happened that quieted the restless spirits forever, until all that remains today is a tale which has become one of the greatest of occult classics.

Yet it wasn't until 1924 that the entire affair was really discovered; that was the year in which Colonel Rivers-Moore retired from a brilliant career in the army. He was still a comparatively young man and both he and his wife wished to purchase a smallish country estate, near enough London to be convenient, but which would also keep them occupied with running and improving it. And when they saw the gray, lichen covered walls of Ladye Place soaring from the moat which surrounded it, to tower above even the highest trees, they knew that it was exactly what they had been seeking.

Although the actual house which they eagerly purchased was only about 100 year old, the foundations upon which it was built and many of the outhouses, estate cottages and farms were centuries old. And the first house to occupy the site had been erected just over 1,000 years after the birth of Christ.

And, of course, as with many country houses, there were the whispered rumors among the local people

that it was haunted. That, however, was something that Colonel Rivers-Moore preferred to ignore, for he certainly didn't believe in ghosts. At least, not to begin with. . . .

The one thing which delighted him, though, was the knowledge that he owned a large piece of his country's inheritance and history, for he found that the pages of the Domesday Book contained first mention of the estate, referring to a one-time Hurley Manor which had belonged to Easgar, Master of the Horse to King Edward the Confessor. A church had existed on the site even then. On the Norman Conquest, Geoffrey de Mandeville founded St. Mary's Priory there in 1086. Some of the existing buildings, and most of the church, dated from this time.

After Henry VIII swept the monks out of St. Mary's Priority in the dissolution of 1536 the land eventually was bought by the Lovelace family. In 1600 Richard Lovelace, first Baron of Hurley, built a great Elizabethan mansion—Ladye Place—on the site of the Priory, converting the monks' refectory or dining hall into stables and a hayloft for his horses. This mansion stood for more than two centuries, falling eventually into such decay that in 1837 it was demolished, and the present house built in its place.

Colonel Rivers-Moore was eager to commence digging right away in an attempt to uncover the various mysteries of Ladye Place, which, although written about, was archeologically almost completely untouched. He hoped to disclose the early foundation work and chart the ancient buildings as they had once existed; also to retrieve whatever archeological treasures might lie buried under the rebuildings and restorations of centuries.

He was intrigued by a charter dated the 15th year of Richard II, which mentioned that Editha, sister of

Edward the Confessor, was buried there. One of his cherished objects was to try and find the grave of Editha, for it was her ghost—the Gray Lady—that was locally claimed to haunt Ladye Place, along with the spector of William Rufus, who was once known there, and the somber spirits of the monks who had prayed in the cloisters of the old Priory.

But where was he to begin? The buildings of Ladye Place were grouped around a courtyard partly occupying the site of the original cloister yard. On the south side of this quadrangle was the old parish church, and in the north side the converted refectory and a large Tudor barn, to which had recently been added a garage and schoolroom.

On the eastern side of the courtyard was a building which had always been known as "Paradise." This was a secondary house believed to have been rebuilt in the 17th century on the actual cloister foundations. Its upper windows at each end, now blocked, had once looked respectively into the church and the refectory.

Detached from this group of buildings and shaded by a great cedar said to have been planted in the days of the Crusaders, was the remaining portion of the old crypt which Lovelace had used as the cellar of his mansion, while other buildings still standing included a tythe barn and dove-cote both erected in 1306.

The present main residence of Ladye Place had been rebuilt around the old farmhouse of the Priory, and parts of it still dated from the 16th century. One stroke of luck for the Colonel was the exceptionally dry season, which caused the foundation outline of Lovelace's vanished mansion to appear through the lawn and allow him accurately to trace its dimensions. Between 1924 and 1930, however, being unsure of where

to start, he attempted no serious excavation beyond digging a trial pit against a corner of the church, to see if the walls had once extended at that point. It was his first move in the search for Editha's grave, but three feet down he struck a flat floor or pavement of hard chalk, and gave up. What made it so much harder to find the early walls of the church was that at the last restoration, both the ground around the church and the church floor itself had been raised some three feet because of flood trouble.

It was shortly after this that the slowly awakening ghosts of Ladye Place seemed to take a hand.

The strange sequence of events began early in 1930, when Mrs. Rivers-Moore's brother, a doctor on the staff of a London hospital, came to stay. One day he told them he had had a surprising "vision" in which he seemed to be in the dining room of "Paradise," talking to a monk dressed in brown. He remarked to the monk that it was a pity about the fireplace in the room as it was not in keeping with the house. The monk, by way of reply, said three times, "Sweep it away," making a sweeping motion with his hand—and to the doctor the fireplace then seemed to fade away, revealing behind it a semi-circular fireplace surmounted by a big oak beam.

Next day, Mrs. Rivers-Moore asked some builders who were then working in the house to remove the offending fireplace. To everyone's astonishment, when they took it out there was disclosed behind it a much older fireplace exactly as described by her brother!

From this time on the ghostly incidents at Ladye Place rapidly gathered momentum. A woman visitor who stayed at "Paradise" had some strange experiences in the house which, she felt sure, indicated the presence of unseen forces. She decided to take some instruction on psychic research in London, and on re-

turning to "Paradise" tried experimenting with automatic writing. One day she came to the Colonel and his wife with a paper on which was written "Empty well." As they did not know of any well about the place, however, this puzzling message meant little. Then, shortly afterwards, their guest brought another scrawl produced by automatic writing which seemed to be a drawing of a well and three arches of the old Priority.

Feeling that there might be something to this allegedly psychic phenomena after all, Colonel Rivers-Moore and his wife, together with a few friends, decided to try a table-rapping seance in the hope of gaining information. The seance was conducted with perfectly open mind and with no medium or spiritualist present, the simple procedure being that the table should give one rap for "No" and two raps for "Yes." They found the table very quickly responsive and were soon obtaining answers from a spirit or entity who gave his name as "King" and said he had lived 400 years ago. The sitters asked "King" about the mysterious well, and he replied that there was such a well 13 feet south from a corner of the church and six feet east, and that it was filled with rubbish.

The Colonel, after six somewhat impatient years at Ladye Place, was willing to take a gamble, and so on April 23, 1930, he began digging where instructed; but all he found was the remains of an old flint wall. Another table-rapping seance was held and "King" then told him that he should dig two feet farther south. He did this, and then found the well exactly as described, filled with building debris! After clearing it for some depth he struck water and work was suspended, though he had now, under guidance, uncovered the foundation of the Tudor mansion and unearthed a few relics including the foot of a skeleton.

There were more table-rapping seances and Mrs. Rivers-Moore, seeking a special test for "King," asked the spirit, "Can you tell me something we can find in the morning that nobody knows is there?" The answer came, "Look for the rust line." Next morning her husband quite easily found a rust line just under the surface of the ground where they had been excavating, at the precise spot indicated.

The messages received by table-rapping continued to be so explicit that relics were unearthed within a few hours of a seance. The well, two old fireplaces and hidden foundations were all discovered by this means. The Colonel pressed on for two years with the work, amassing little treasures as he went: 13th century floor tiling from the church and Priority, old church carvings, pottery, 17th century smoking pipes, a skull and other remains. He began a unique museum in the old musicians' gallery of the ancient refectory.

The Colonel also rediscovered and cleared out a "secret passage" leading from the moat to the cellar of Ladye Place. The cellar had been constructed over the monks' burial ground, and skeletons had since been dug from its floor. It was here in this cellar, in the bloodless revolution of 1688, that the Whig plotters against James II had met at the request of the third Lord Lovelace and decided to invite William of Orange to the English throne. Through the "secret passage" from the moat, which was in fact a sewer to the mansion, had crept the revolutionaries gathering for their midnight conferences.

So far as the Colonel and his friends were able to make out at the seances, "King," who had lived at the time of the dissolution of the monastery, had stolen some jewels and thrown them down the well, which he had directed them to find. The Colonel, however, having by the spring of 1932 got down to river level,

and working up to his waist in water in the old well, had little hopes of ever probing the bottom of it, even though the table-messages urged that it should be emptied so that the spirit of the Gray Lady could find peace.

There had also been conversations, meantime, with a monk named Edipus, who had lived about the year 1200. In fact the phantoms of Ladye Place had really become alive, for several guests who stayed there—some among them the strongest of skeptics—confessed to psychic experiences including the sight of spectral monks. All this made the Colonel and his wife more inclined to give credit to the reports of people who, in the past, had claimed to have seen the apparitions of William Rufus and the Gray Lady.

In 1932 the Colonel and his wife, at the invitation of friends, described at a drawing room meeting in Reading the remarkable psychic guidance they had been given in their excavations so far at Ladye Place. The Colonel, not for the first time, stressed, "We have had no so-called mediums or spiritualists at all, but have conducted proceedings entirely on our own. We are not spiritualists but have quite open minds on the subject." A former vicar of Hurley who was present at the little gathering said there must be some great good to come out of what was happening and there was no knowing what would be the end of it.

Indeed, as the years went by there seemed no end. Throughout the 1930s the Colonel, freely enlisting the help of friends, fellow members of the Berkshire Archeological Society and others interested in helping dig or research and classify his mounting collection, pursued his investigations of the old Priory with singular dedication, having a devoted helpmate in his wife. A second old well was discovered, though after much effort to drain the water from both wells nothing of interest was found. The wells had obviously been cleaned out when Lovelace's mansion was built. Editha's grave, too, upon the discovery of which the Colonel had placed so much hope, eluded him. He had vowed he would search for the Gray Lady's resting place even if it meant ruining the grounds, but although many graves were struck and some mixed bones and other grisly relics uncovered, all that came to light that could possibly be connected with Editha was a base of hard core surrounded by traces of tile flooring, in the center of the north transept of the church. This may well have formed the base of some early shrine.

The Colonel did succeed in laying bare other secrets of the Priory. He uncovered almost all the foundations of the monastic church, chapter house, part of the cloister, and a range of buildings north of the church. His discoveries brought such new light on the buildings that he had to take down some of the tablets put up by the previous occupier as they were so obviously incorrect. The contents of his museum swelled and during all this work the ghosts of Ladye Place grew steadily more restless.

A woman who for a time occupied "Paradise" with her child became convinced there was an evil influence in the building. She was advised to sprinkle holy water in the rooms. But just as she was about to do this, the warning apparition of a monk appeared to her and said, "You must not do it—you will stop my work." A medium was brought in, but as soon as he went into a trance the monk took possession and became violent, trying to attack the sitters.

Through the medium the monk declared that he had practiced black magic, and ever since he tried to keep his persecutors out of the house. He was assured by the circle that he had been forgiven by his

Father Prior, whereupon he promised not to cause further difficulty in the house.

Other shades, however, began to appear. Spectral monks of the old Priory were seen by friends and visitors to Ladye Place many dozens of times during the 1930s. Commonly a visitor walking in the cloisters in the early evening would see a man dressed in monk's habit, with arms crossed, pass him and then vanish before his eyes. Colonel Rivers-Moore and his wife compiled a dossier of the weird happenings, each story being signed by the witneses, who included an architect, a doctor, and officers of the Navy, Army and Air Force.

For nine years the Colonel and various helpers were busy digging at Ladye Place, then he finished the work alone. Twenty years after he had first moved into the house, he had unearthed its every secret: except the most intriguing of all—the burial place of the ubiquitous "Gray Lady." And, towards the end of 1947, Ladye Place was sold.

Unfortunately, it was not sold as an entity. For the cloisters, the monks' parlor, the chapter house and the refectory were sold together; the land was bought by neighboring farmers and market gardeners and the mansion was converted into several homes. It still stands today, but no doubt it is changed so far beyond recognition that even the ghosts had moved to some better place—for they have never been seen again.

THE STAR ATTRACTION—A DEAD ACTRESS!

Although not everybody would agree that there's no business like show business, most of those connected with the profession admit that it's one business which has more than its fair share of traditions, superstitions and ghosts. And if the ghost stories that have emanated from Margate's Theatre Royal had only reached me from my thespian friends and acquaintances, I might not have accorded them quite as much attention as I have done.

But times have changed for this holiday resort's theater—some stage productions do still take place there. Nowadays, however, it has gone over mainly to the world of the pop groups, bingo clubs and even, occasionally, auction sales. Yet still the ghost of the inimitable Sarah Thorne makes her presence both felt and seen by a surprisingly large number of people.

Although Sarah was a highly accompanied and extremely popular actress in the last century, by 1874 she realized a new talent. She took over the lease of this small theater and opened a school of acting which soon gained a high reputation and turned out actors and actresses like the Vanburgh sisters, George Arliss and Sir Seymour Hick. Her school lasted under her personal direction for exactly a quarter of a century. Then, on the day when many of her star pupils and

old friends were to stage a special Jubilee show in her honor in London's St. James's Theatre, Sarah died from influenza.

Shortly after that, the unending chain of strange incidents began to happen at that theater she loved so dearly, Margate's Theatre Royal. For even in death, it seemed, Sarah Thorne's motto was: "The show must go on." As she lay dying, she assured the friends who had gathered about her bedside that "So long as my theater is there, I shall be there, too." She apparently has kept this promise remarkably well, for no sooner did she die than her spirit returned to the theater . . . where it has remained ever since.

The witnesses of various unaccountable noises and, from time to time, a "filmy form," included theater staff, actors, and Sarah Thorne's son (she was married to Thomas MacKnight, a journalist). He told several people of his seeing the wraith of his mother, among them N. V. Norman, who in the 1930s recalled: "I used to send companies to Margate and play there a great deal, and I remember MacKnight emphatically telling me that he had many times seen the ghost of his mother. My wife (Beatrice Withers), who as a young girl was a pupil of Sarah Thorne, had heard MacKnight say the same thing."

That there should be such firm evidence about the existence of Sarah's ghost was doubly surprising because the theater had already received the attentions of one ghostly figure. This was believed to be the spirit of a demented actor of the last century who, on being summarily dismissed, bought himself a box for the next night's performance and during the course of the play leaped from the box to the orchestra pit, breaking his neck. After the turn of the century this actor's ghost was seen to appear sitting motionless in the box on so many occasions that the management

eventually had to withdraw it from sale and leave it always curtained. Even then the actor's apparition was seen to continue to draw aside the curtains during a performance; one of the many witnesses of this phenomenon was the late W. J. Macqueen-Pope, the theater historian. The haunting ceased when the boxes were finally bricked up as part of new fire precautions in the theater (an escape tower with spiral staircase was built at that side of the stage), but this was only done in recent years.

In the 1920s and early 1930s, however, Sarah's ghost provided a more poignant haunting at the theater, though few people at the time cared to speak openly about it. In April, 1934, Caspar Middleton took over the lease of the Theatre Royal. He knew nothing at all of its ghostly background and was, in any case, strongly skeptical of such matters. Yet within weeks he had seen the ghost, not once but three times. This was his later testimony:

"Twice on coming out of the circle buffet some time after the performance I saw it walk through the doorway from the stairs leading to the boxes and gallery on one side, and go slowly around the back of the circle and disappear through a wall on the other side. At one time there was an opening in this wall with stairs leading down to the stage, and I am told that Sarah Thorne had a small office on the side of the stage which could be approached from these stairs.

"On one occasion the ghost passed so close that I could almost have reached it with my hand. On another night I was standing in the circle, when I saw it by the door in the stalls leading to the boxes."

The ghost, it is claimed, wore clothes similar to the sleep-walking dress of Lady Macbeth—bluish-gray draperies, flowing and transparent. Mr. Middleton did not immediately say anything about what he had seen,

but asked a few patrons of the theater about its history and made inquiries among several old residents of Margate. Even when he had established that the theater was strongly believed to be haunted, he kept silent. What finally made the whole affair public was the alarming experience of two acresses shortly afterwards.

On August 22, 1934, members of the theater's new repertory company were rehearsing at midnight for their opening performance of "The Naughty Lady" and, as the stage was laid out for use by the company appearing that week, the rehearsal was being held in the circle buffet. One of the actresses, Peggy Ford-Carrington, left the buffet and stood under a small gaslight at the side of the circle, reading her part. The rest of the theater was in darkness, with the fireproof curtain down on the silent stage. In her own words: "Suddenly I was startled by a gentle moan or cry which broke the stillness, and glancing up I saw something leaning over the box on the other side, waving its arms about. It was terrifying and I could not stop myself from screaming. Chic (another actress) came rushing out, and as soon as she saw it she fainted. I could not take my eyes off it. . . ."

Next out of the buffet on hearing the scream was Mr. Middleton. "I immediately looked across the theater, and, in the circle box, saw something swaying and waving over the edge. Despite what I had previously seen I tried to think it was some practical joke, yet I could not understand how anyone could have entered the place to carry it out, and the door to the stage itself was locked. I immediately ran around the circle, through the door from which I had previously seen the ghost appear, and into the box. No one was there and nothing had been disturbed."

While Mr. Middleton was running around to the box

Miss Ford-Carrington was held transfixed by the apparition—a bluish-gray transparent figure of a woman—and to her continued amazement saw it gradually rise into the air over the front of the box and disappear into the theater roof!

Now that the haunting was made public other evidence in support was forthcoming, and it seemed clear that the ghost's practice was to make a tour of the circle, just as Sarah Thorne had done after every evening performance, disappearing at the spot where her office had been. Investigators who held a night's vigil, however, saw nothing.

There was an unexpected development when Sister E. Thorne of Harrow, a niece of Sarah Thorne, on hearing of the renewed ghostly activity at the Theatre Royal called and told the lessee that it might not, after all, be her famous aunt who was responsible for the haunting. Many people had believed in the ghost as far back as the 1890s, said Sister Thorne, and Sarah herself had often described how she encountered a supernatural figure wearing a gray habit, in a vault beneath the theater. The vault, formed by a subterranean passage which then ran under the street, was believed to date from a Catholic retreat that stood on the site long before the theater was built. Sister Thorne said that her aunt, using this passageway one day, came face to face with the apparition and promptly fainted, lying helpless in the vault for some three or four hours before being found.

So this posed the question, was the apparition recently seen that of Sarah Thorne? Wearing, perhaps, the dress she had used when playing Lady Macbeth? Or was it the figure the actress herself had seen, gowned in a blue-gray costume like that of a nun? The evidence was not at all conclusive.

During the following years there were more reports

of inexplicable happenings at the theater; mainly strange noises and half-seen ghostly shapes. The ghosts remained with the theater through a checkered career which saw it used for repertory, twice-nightly revue, wrestling, and even as a cinema. The theater closed during World War II when it was badly damaged by a bomb that fell nearby. In 1948, the year of its reopening—and the year in which Dame Irene Vanburgh, celebrating her diamond jubilee on the stage, returned to tread the boards where her apprenticeship had begun—manifestations were seen again. Late one night just before the reopening in July, phenomena occurred of which the chief features were the prolonged screams of a terrified woman and the sound of footsteps hurrying across the empty stage. Mr. Robert G. Butler, the theater's managing director, and no fewer than thirteen other people testified to this weird occurrence.

Another phenomenon reported at the theater was a mysterious orange ball of light. This, first seen in the auditorium and scarcely bigger than a marble, traveled over the footlights and across the stage, growing to the size of a football before disappearing through the passage to the stage door.

Later, in 1954, two frightened workmen who stayed on late one night doing repairs at the theater, said that just as they were preparing to leave they heard, in the circle overhead, the sound of agitated pacing. The ghost, however, was not visible. Early the following year the assistant stage manager told of the theater's heavy front doors being unbolted twice in the early hours, and of the foyer lights blazing on hours after they had been put out. There was, he said, a general feeling of eeriness about the place. The caretaker at the time supported this, adding that frequently after turning out the lights backstage he found

them on again some time later. Often, he said, the sensation of uneasiness in the theater at night was almost overwhelming.

So the theater hauntings persisted through several changes of management into the 1960s, when after a period of quiet, the ghost or ghosts became suddenly very active once more.

In January, 1966, Alfred Tanner, who knew nothing about the theater's history, undertook to paint the auditorium for the lessee, Mr. Henry Jacobs. He began to work at 10 P.M. on a Sunday night, working through alone in the theater till 6:30 A.M., and several times during the night thought he heard "coughing and whispering." Puzzled, he searched the building but could find nothing to account for the noises. The following night, as he later told the *Isle of Thanet Gazette*, "At about 1:30 A.M., I heard the booking office door slam. When I investigated the door was wide open. A few minutes later I heard a backstage door slam heavily. I went to look and found it was closed and bolted, as it was when I started work."

Then, as he was standing by the entrance to the auditorium, there suddenly came into his startled view what seemed to be a disembodied female head.

"It came around the curtains on the left of the stage. It was just a head and neck, with a lot of frizzy hair, two slits for eyes and a thin, receding chin. It was the head and shoulders of a woman. I watched it for a few seconds moving across the stage before it disappeared."

His eyes were then drawn to another door of the auditorium, where a set of heavy curtains had been lifted clear of the wall and folded on a large semi-circular wooden pelmet.

"I saw the curtains lift up and then slowly drop down as if someone was lifting them down from the

pelmet. I went to the door, and as I lifted the curtains I felt an odd sensation at the back of my neck, as if someone was staring at me, and my hair started to bristle."

It was then that Tanner decided he had had enough. He locked up the theater and went home, but was so shaken that he could not sleep.

On returning to the theater next morning Mr. Tanner, as he was going upstairs with a colleague, stopped suddenly by an old photograph of Sarah Thorne dressed in her sleep-walking costume for "Macbeth."

"That's the face I saw last night!" he exclaimed.

Tanner refused on any account to work alone again in the theater at night. Mr. Jacobs, the lessee, told me, "I did not know what to make of his story; after all, one might expect a very old theater to be full of noises at night. The main thing was that the painting should be finished, so I suggested to Mr. Tanner that he take someone with him for company on the third night, and he finally agreed to this."

The man who accompanied Tanner was Lawrence John Rodgers, of Margate, who, like his companion, knew nothing of the theater's ghostly history. Rodgers afterwards described how, when they were both in the auditorium, strange noises culminated in "a terrific crash, as if something very heavy had been thrown into the stalls from the balcony. We went to the spot where the noise came from but could find nothing."

At this Tanner gave up and went home, but Rodgers went along to the police station to report the strange happenings, with the result that at 2 A.M. eight policemen searched the theater from top to bottom but failed to find anything that would account for the noises.

Tanner, summing up his alarming three nights in

the building, told the *Isle of Thanet Gazette*: "All the time I was in the theater I experienced the same feeling I had during the war when I used to go out on night patrol in the desert in the Eighth Army—a feeling that someone or something was always behind you and that something awful was going to happen."

An interested reader of the *Gazette* report of these most recent hauntings, published on the morning of Friday, January 28, 1966, was James H. Chell, a Margate teacher who had for some years studied psychical research. Chell immediately sought and was given permission to keep observation in the theater that night. He duly arrived at the theater with his dog, to be told that there was now another man who wished to keep a vigil—would he agree to them keeping watch in company? Chell agreed to this, and so he and Thomas Redshaw of Margate, who had not met before, prepared for their vigil. After the bingo sessions were finished for the day the two men searched the building thoroughly to make sure that no practical jokers had been at work. Then, after making sure that all external doors were secure and not capable of being opened from the outside, they turned off the electric lights at the big switches situated on a high platform behind the stage backcloth. This left the theater in darkness except for two small gaslights, one on each side of the auditorium.

Chell said later: "We began our vigil at about 12:30 A.M. After half an hour there was a sudden coldness and a noise sounded behind the stage backcloth, as though several large pieces of furniture were being dragged about. My dog, which had been silent till then, began to howl; her hackles went up, something which I had not seen in her before, nor have I since.

"I investigated the noises but found nothing at all behind the backcloth; no furniture, boxes or anything.

Returning to my seat I began to eat the sandwiches I had brought. At about 1:35 it again went intensely cold; then there was a loud explosion and all the lights in the auditorium came on. I immediately went with Mr. Redshaw to the platform behind the backcloth, climbed the ladder and saw that the heavy ironclad light switches, which we had switched off, were now back in the 'on' position. Human hands could never have switched on all three of these switches simultaneouly; even were a man to find the strength to do so, he would need three hands to operate them all at once.

"We searched all through the building again, going up the spiral stairs ascending a tower at the side of the stage, where formerly three boxes existed. At the top of this staircase we noticed a smell as though there were dead leaves present, and after a few minutes this smell changed to one of roses. Again we experienced a wave of intense cold, which despite the fact that the building was centrally heated, was very unpleasant. As before, the cold disappeared with the passing of the event.

"At about 2:30 there was another explosion and all the lights went out again. On reinspecting the light switches I found they had now been returned to the 'off' position. Returning to my seat in the front stalls I began to make a note of what had occurred and was suddenly aware of the ticking of a large clock, which lasted for exactly four minutes. I knew there was no clock in the theater and later found that none had existed in the building within living memory.

"Nothing more occurred until about 3:15, when I became aware of a large patch on the wall where, years ago, there had existed a box, which was now bricked in and the wall painted blue. The patch, which was dirty brown in color, moved slightly, then disappeared.

I thought it might be my imagination at first, but when the 'thing' appeared a second time I knew it to be a fact. It remained for about 30 seconds and then vanished.

"During all this time there were various shufflings and scratchings in the theater but I knew it was hopeless to try and track the source of them.

"At 3:55 I thought I would try and have a nap, as our vigil had been rather a strain, so I took a blanket from the organ in front of the stage, put my bag under my head and settled down. It was then two minutes to four. I awoke suddenly to find Redshaw absent. Hearing a noise from the first gallery, I looked up and saw him trying to light a match and walking slowly forward. On seeing I had woken up he came down and asked if I had heard a bump. I said I had not, but that something had woken me. It was three minutes past four; I had fallen asleep immediately and slept for only five minutes.

"Redshaw asked for my flashlight, but as I handed it to him I thought I could 'feel' something in the vicinity of the first gallery, so I turned and shone the flashlight towards the gallery, where, in the beam of light, I saw the same brown shape as before. It hung around near one of the slim pillars supporting the gallery and then glided towards the next pillar where it suddenly disappeared, again accompanied by the wave of intense cold. We searched the building together, and when we came to the spot where we had seen the brown shape, the place felt evil.

"It was now about 4:30 and we decided to leave. We locked the door quietly as we left and walked up the road towards the main road. We had been walking for some time, well out of earshot of the theater, when we were suddenly caught up with by a policeman on a motorcycle. He asked us our business

and, when we told him, what time we had left the theater. He then said that only fifteen minutes ago someone living near the theater had heard a loud explosion coming from the building and telephoned the police station. We had heard nothing, so the explosion must have taken place after we had left the building."

So, perhaps, Sarah's ghost has engaged a new cast for its unearthly melodramas . . .

A SECRET ANNIVERSARY

There were mixed feelings in Mordley when Sheila Parsons was appointed headmistress of the local school. Some people thought she was much too young at twenty-three. She had only just come down from the university, they pointed out, and could hardly be expected to exert the kind of authority required of a head teacher.

But the majority felt it would be a good thing to have a young person, someone young enough to understand the children, someone who would stay for many years and create a sense of continuity, because continuity was important to Mordley. It didn't like change very much and had remained much the same during the 200 years it had been in existence. It was a small community, set in a lonely part of the East Riding of Yorkshire, a tiny area of life in the austere sweep of the moors.

Sheila was aware of the difficulties facing her when she arrived at the village for the start of the 1931 autumn term, but she was a determined young woman. Some of her friends had opted for jobs at larger, more glamorous schools, but Sheila had always wanted to teach at a village school. This was not really surprising because, although she was a city girl, she had enjoyed many pleasant holidays in the country. She saw the job as a challenge, one she was eager to accept.

After the first week there was no doubt that she was a success and even the people who had been against her appointment admitted that the attitude had changed. Where school had once been a grim but necessary chore, it was now approached with pleasure. Laughter was heard in the tiny classrooms—a sound that had not been heard very often in the past years.

Sheila settled quickly into her new life. She lived in a house on the edge of the village, a pleasant cottage of local stone with a pretty garden. Her morning walk to school became a feature of life, because of the number of children who waited by their gates so they could walk along with her.

In her letters home Sheila described the children as exactly like children anywhere. Some were intelligent, other less so but in general they were a typical cross-section of any school. She believed this was so until one morning in late October, when the first signs of something uncanny and inexplicable appeared.

As usual, she distributed the children's milk which was provided in a churn from a local farmer. When the children complained that the milk was curdled she was surprised. The weather was typically autumnal, sharp and cold and not the sort of weather to affect milk. Even more surprising was the explanation given by the children, who said the milk had been

"turned by pixies." At first, Sheila thought they were joking but, when she laughed, they grew quite solemn, for they obviously believed it. She was amused and pointed out that such things were products of the imagination. There was no real harm in the children believing such things, she thought, but it was important to examine them with a scientific attitude.

Later that day she mentioned the incident to the vicar, the Rev. James McCall, when he paid his usual visit. He had been in the village many years and was now an old man happy to spend his remaining years in a community he had grown to love. He listened to her story and simply shrugged, remarking that country people retained many old beliefs, and that many of them were still untouched by modern, rational thought.

So Sheila thought no more about the incident, which she dismissed as an interesting and rather charming characteristic; but the memory was to return some two weeks later.

Shelia had been encouraging the children to take part in social activities after school, believing it was part of her function to use the school not only as a center for learning, but also as a focal point of local activities. In such a remote area the school was the only possible place for activities such as plays, choirs and recreation. These projects had been well received by the parents and enthusiastically greeted by the children. With such support Sheila could see all her plans coming to fruition, and she was eager to make a real contribution to local life.

For some weeks she had been coaching the children in a plan. It was the first time they had been in one and their response was stimulating. Sheila decided that the play would be performed for the parents and the occasion could be used to draw the com-

munity together in a common activity. So it was with optimism that Sheila sent invitations to all the parents.

The next morning, the usual crowd of pupils were waiting to greet her. Sheila was disappointed when one little girl said her parents could not come on the night mentioned, which was November 30. She was even more disappointed when the others joined in with the same story, and when she reached the school the same message came from the other children. When a full count was made Sheila discovered—to her surprise—that every single parent claimed they could not attend the play because it was on November 30.

Puzzled, she asked the children if there was any special reason for this lack of support. Perhaps there was some other event for the same evening which she hadn't heard about? But the children had no explanation; it seemed they didn't know. . . .

When the parents came to collect their children Sheila was waiting. The first person she asked was Mrs. Grimshaw, a friendly soul, who often left presents of butter and homemade jam at Sheila's cottage. Mrs. Grimshaw was apologetic, for it seemed she would like to see the play but not on the evening of November 30. Any other day would be suitable, she said evasively, but not *that* particular one. . . .

The other parents gave much the same reply. It was nothing personal, but it so happened that the night in question was just unsuitable. If the date could be changed they would be glad to attend. Sheila asked repeatedly if there was any other reason, but this question was met with bland friendliness; the date was inconvenient, that was all.

For the first time since she had arrived in the village, Sheila was aware that she was a stranger. It was obvious that the villagers were keeping something from her, but the puzzling thing was why they should.

She wondered if her ideas and ambitions for the school were unpopular, or if she had offended the community in some other way, for she now sensed a mass disapproval.

In the space of a single day her life changed; now she felt lonely, isolated, depressed—and rather afraid.

That evening she went along to the vicarage. It was important that she should talk to someone and it occurred to her that the Reverend McCall might be able to help, because he knew these people and, after his long service to the community, he was almost one of them.

She wasted no time, for she was bewildered by the intangible and mysterious mood of the villagers and she told him what had happened, how she had been snubbed . . . and she wondered why. Impatiently, Sheila asked the vicar to tell her what it was; if she had made a mistake it could be repaired. The vicar shook his head and said it was nothing to do with her. However, he admitted, it had a connection with a previous incident at the school regarding belief in strange things.

November 30, Sheila was told, was an anniversary, but not a conventional one, not the sort usually celebrated by the majority of the people. It had all started some 150 years earlier when a certain Joan Ticehurst had lived in the village. She was a bright girl, pretty and clever. Perhaps it was her intelligence that was her downfall, for she was interested in herbal medicine and one day treated the child of a neighbor for stomach pains. The child died and the cause of death was said to be Joan's treatment.

These were primitive times. Witchcraft was still feared and still punished by law. Rumor grew that Joan Ticehurst was a witch, an evil influence on the village. One night a council of villagers met and came

to a decision. A fire was built and the people of the village went to seize Joan Ticehurst.

But the girl saw them coming. She fled, pursued by the people who had once been her friends. It was a dark, dismal night, typical of the time of year and although the girl ran for her life the men, who pursued her, were determined to see their own justice done. It seemed she was doomed until she entered a wood just above the church. The men searched the place, but could find no trace of her. Joan Ticehurst had disappeared into thin air. They searched all night and into the next day and when there was still no sign of her it was decided that they had been right about her—the powers of darkness had helped her escape; the Devil himself had intervened. . . .

The vicar sighed and said that on the anniversary of that night—on November 30—the villagers claimed that Joan Ticehurst returned to take her vengeance on the village and that anyone seen by her would disappear . . . and follow her into the darkness of Hades.

Puzzled, Sheila asked why the villagers hadn't told her this, for although it sounded ridiculous, it was at least a reason—or were they ashamed of their own superstition? The vicar said they were people who believed in keeping their own affairs to themselves. They had grown up with the belief that Joan Ticehurst returned every year, and nothing would convince them otherwise.

The young teacher was puzzled; stories of that kind were nonsense, she said, and shouldn't be encouraged. The vicar admitted that he didn't understand their belief, but he could not say they were wrong, because he did not know.

Sheila argued that they *were* wrong. It was primitive superstition, and as a teacher she would be failing in her duty if she allowed that sort of attitude

to be absorbed by the children. The old vicar told her it was indeed a superstition, but harmless, and no one would be hurt if they followed their old custom. To the young teacher, however, truth had to be the most important aim.

By the next day she had made up her mind. At the school she announced that the play was to be held on November 30, as originally planned. There was a strange lack of response from the children and she knew her message would reach the parents.

As she expected, the children arrived the following day with letters from the parents and each had much the same message: owing to the uncertain weather their children would not be able to take part in the school play, at least on November 30, for the point was again made—apologetically—that another date would be suitable.

Sheila was determined there would be no change. True, the play would not go on, but she was not going to go along with the pretense that a ghost appeared on a certain night. It was too ridiculous and humiliating to expect her, of all people, to do so.

Darkness came quickly the evening of November 30. After the children had gone Sheila stayed in the school. She had a stubborn streak and was determined to do what she had planned if the play had taken place. She knew that the villagers would see the lights and knew that she, at least, was not afraid to walk abroad.

The time passed slowly. Despite herself, Sheila began to feel rather conspicuous. A sense of isolation came over her. It was ridiculous, but she was actually feeling nervous. However, she was determined that she would prove her point. She had to—for the sake of the future of the school and her place in it.

The nearby church clock boomed out ten strokes

and it was time to go. Thankfully, Sheila put out the lights and walked briskly into the moonless night. It was a mild night, heavy, with a distant threat of thunder, and as she walked along the road her footsteps echoed in the uncanny stillness.

Suddenly, she heard a sound—a growing, distant noise. It might have been thunder far away or the wind shaking the ancient yew trees. She turned, but saw that there was no one there. As she walked on the noise grew—it sounded, at first, like a train—and then it came closer, so that she could begin to identify the sound. It was the babble of many voices like a crowd at a football match, or at a public execution. . . .

Without pausing, Sheila broke into a run. It was not a conscious decision, but an automatic response to the sensation of terror that suddenly enveloped her. She ran wildly, sobbing brokenly.

In the village, Mrs. Grimshaw heard a noise. She moved to the window and drew aside the lace curtains. Her mouth gaped as she saw the school teacher running past. Then a scream filled the night and Mrs. Grimshaw shouted for her husband. He came quickly, recognizing the note of alarm in his wife's voice. Quickly, she told him what had happened and he made for the door.

Sheila heard the voice behind her—but it was almost lost in the baying of other, deeper voices. She gasped and ran harder, panic clutching at her, cutting off her breath.

She was running over a field. She stumbled, fell, picked herself up and raced into the darkness. Her clothes were muddy, her hair damp and blown over her face. Still, the voices sounded, echoed in her brain, a refrain of terror impossible to ignore.

In the village a search party had been organized.

Mr. Grimshaw led the party to the point where he had last seen the school teacher. The men shouted, holding their torches high, but there was no response. They were local men and knew the legend and, as their voices echoed back almost mockingly, they stayed together in a tight group.

They searched through the night, tramped over moors and hills in their search. At last, day came and they turned towards Mordley. Twenty men had searched and there had been no sign of the school teacher. Each man remembered the legend, but no man reminded the other.

As they passed the wood on the far side of the village someone saw a flash of white. They went into the wood and found Sheila Parsons. She was huddled on the ground, her clothes torn and her hair unkempt. Gently, they carried her to the village and sent for the vicar, who was able to assure them that Sheila was all right. She was tired, under strain, but she would survive.

No one mentioned the legend or the curious fact that Sheila Parsons had been found in Joan's Wood, traditionally the last place that exactly 150 years before a young girl had been seen.

There was, of course, an explanation of that night. It was said that Sheila Parsons had lost her way in the darkness. It was not unnatural that she became frightened and everybody sympathized. Sheila Parsons did not speak about the matter very much except to confirm the story, so it seemed that everyone was satisfied.

Sheila is still the headmistress at Mordley village school, where she has become very much a part of the place by now, and is as popular as ever with the children. Times change and the legend of Joan Ticehurst is not heard much these days, but it is odd that

no school function is ever held on November 30. It may be just coincidence, but most people—including Sheila—seem to prefer it that way.

FRONT PAGE STORY—BY A GHOST!

Most of us visualize a haunted church as some age-old edifice, perhaps with its bell somberly tolling out the swiftly passing hours of the centuries from an ivy-covered tower which overlooks mysterious woods, and remote villages. Perhaps the idea of lichen-covered tombstones, forming a timeless impression of history, does something to add to this popular image. Yet, the church which has been regarded as one of the most haunted in Britain for many years, certainly doesn't fall into this niche.

The church that is so frequently visited by psychical investigators and the curious-minded, stands boldly out among small terraced houses, along a suburban side street in Acton, West London. This church's Victorian red-bricked façade has dulled and faded after less than a century; its wrought iron railings have rusted and its somber stained-glass windows have been covered with strong grills to protect them against the acts of vandalism which the teenage gangs who roam this district indulge in so freely.

After all, they care even less for other people's property than they do for any alleged ghosts. But

there are a great many ghosts here—and extremely well authenticated spirits they are, too.

When St. Dunstan's was first built in 1870, however, its environment was completely different. Nearby, the stately home of Friar's Place was one of the showplaces of Middlesex. And although this manor has long since gone, it's known that many centuries earlier a monastery stood on that very site, a site that's occupied by an ice-cream factory today.

The hauntings, however, did not begin until about thirty years ago, when the curate of St. Dunstan's was leaving after a Sunday morning service, in the company of the organist. To the musician's astonishment, this elderly and highly respected clergyman, the Reverend Boustead, appeared to be lost in thought of a short time. Then he said, very earnestly and impulsively, "I must tell you something. I cannot tell anyone else, because they will laugh at me. There is something strange about our church. I have seen things when I've been alone in there . . . some of these old monks who used to live around here. No, no—I don't want to say any more, but I know there is something there. Now please don't tell anyone else what I have been saying. They'll think I'm mad."

A few years afterwards, in the winter of 1937-38, there came news of hauntings in the neighborhood—not at St. Dunstan's, but at the northern edge of the old Friar's Place estate, scarcely more than half a mile away. Here, at the junction of Horn Lane and Western Avenue, an old building which had preserved its ancient air in a changing neighborhood was said to be troubled by the specter of a monk.

This former farmhouse, which had become St. Gabriel's Vicarage, with its cell-like cellars, cobbled paths, and what was thought to be the remains of a medieval courtyard, was then up for sale as it was too big

for the vicar's needs. The vicar, the Rev. C. V. Camplin-Cogan, though himself highly skeptical about the haunting, admitted that people that stayed in the house had heard uncanny noises, and that these were supposed to be caused by the ghost of an old monk buried under a cobbled path just outside the house. The vicar's wife said that she had often heard noises like padded footsteps on the stairs and in the hall, but on going to look had seen nothing.

Then the apparition had appeared. A bedroom in one of the older parts of the house had a marble floor—it was thought to have been used as an oratory—and a startled guest who slept in the room described to the vicar and his wife how he had seen the shadowy figure of a monk suddenly appear in it. The harmless spirit, it seemed, had returned to wander about its former home.

The haunting of St. Gabriel's Vicarage was looked upon as a fleeting wonder, more arguments being raised over the actual age of some old parts of the building rather than over the ghost—though it was generally agreed that if the monks of long ago had not actually lived on the vicarage site, they had certainly lived close by to it, on the old St. Bartholomew's land.

Six years later, in December, 1944, a new vicar came to St. Dunstan's. The Rev. Hugh Harold Anton-Stephens, who was in his fifties, had held two long ministries in Cheshire and London, and in his younger days had served as an Army chaplain. He was a widower, his wife having died only that year. Mr. Anton-Stephens had not been many months at St. Dunstan's before, like the late Mr. Boustead, he found there was something very strange about the church; but he kept his own counsel about this, until one day he chanced to hear of the recent haunting of St. Gabriel's Vicarage. After checking back carefully on the circumstances

of this, he decided it was time to make public his own extraordinary findings at St. Danstun's, and accepted an invitation to write an article for the local newspaper, the *Acton Gazette*. The article was published in November, 1946, and in it, after noting "the familiar attitude of respectable skepticism" at the time of the vicarage haunting, and recalling that the ghostly figure seen was that of a monk, Mr. Anton-Stephens revealed:

"About a dozen such monks can be seen on most evenings walking in procession up the center aisle and into the chancel of St. Dunstan's church. They wear golden brown habits and are hooded. Another monk attired in eucharistic vestments occasionally celebrates Mass in the memorial chapel. Four of us, unknown to each other, have witnessed these phenomena, from time to time. We are all truthful folk and it is impossible for four people to suffer from the same hallucination at the same time.

"More interesting is a solitary monk, wearing a violet hood, with whom we hold conversation.

"The procession of monks probably belong in some past age to a religious foundation in the locality. They are attracted to the nearest consecrated building. Their deepest satisfaction is to repeat what was their greatest happiness during earth-existence.

"My violet-hooded friend belongs to a different class. He is a ministering spirit, sent to inspire and instruct. I am indebted to him, as to many others, for much help." This monk, said the vicar, had recently given him advice regarding confirmation classes at the church.

Mr. Anton-Stephens, after firmly establishing the appearance of the apparitions, went on to suggest in his article how such spirits could inspire, encourage and guide those who saw them. He invited debate on the

subject. He was, I am told by a parishioner of the time, far more concerned with the religious aspect of the phenomena than the ghostly one. This parishioner, who was one of those who saw the monks prior to the vicar's disclosures, tells me, "I saw them three or four times on evenings when a discussion group was being held in the vestry. Because of the warm weather the vestry door leading into the body of the church was kept open, and I saw exactly the same thing on each occasion: a body of monks in brown habits walking in procession up the central aisle towards and into the chancel. Seen out of the corner of the eye they were clear, but disappeared when looked at directly.

"I knew nothing of any previous sightings or of the history of the church. The experience had no emotional impact on me—they were just monks walking up the aisle. When I mentioned the occurrence to the vicar he was quite matter of fact about it."

Not so the newspapers which immediately took up the vicar's story. They were intrigued by the unusual spectacle of twelve ghosts appearing together, and found from the vicar that those who had seen the manifestations included another parishioner who helped as his secretary.

As dusk set on the cold and rainy November evening following Mr. Anton-Stephens' disclosures, a Fleet Street reporter made his way to St. Dunstan's with the declared intention of either confirming or disproving the curious story. The vigil, however, produced more than he had bargained for.

The reporter, Kenneth Mason, wrote that he took a seat up in the far left-hand corner of the darkened nave. He was tired, cold and wet; the silence of the deserted church and the heaviness of the atmosphere combined to force him into sleep. What it was

that wakened him he did not know, but as his eyes opened he saw the phantom monks, six of them, in gray gowns, hooded, with heads bowed.

"Slowly but happily they came towards me. I took my courage in both hands and barred their way. I faced them. They had passed right through me!"

The monks, who were walking to the altar, passed through Mr. Mason two-by-two—"slightly below my neck and to the left of my collar bone." The time was ten minutes past seven. As they walked on he was aware of a voice speaking to him.

" 'Near here, 500 years ago," the quiet voice told me, "stood a monastery. We were its occupants. This is our past, this is our future.' Reverently the monks genuflected to the altar. Then at the back of the church a light snapped on. A human voice spoke and the spell was broken. From the tower came the mournful toll of the bell. At its sound the monks vanished, while I was left uncomfortable, wide awake, and wondering.

"That is all. I cannot explain it; that is not my function. But these things I saw last night."

A footnote to this surprising report in the newspaper stated: "Kenneth Mason is a quiet, sober-minded, reliable reporter who has never dabbled in the occult. He was a lieutenant in the Royal Navy during the war."

Mr. Mason held his vigil on a Friday night. During the weekend he returned to St. Dunstan's with a photographer, in the hope of obtaining a picture of the manifestations. By the vestry door, one of the twelve ghost monks, plainly visible to Mr. Anton-Stephens, his secretary, and a parishioner, stood looking on as the cameraman tried vainly to snap him; but Mr. Mason saw nothing. He reported, "The distraction of children trying to peer inside, and the babel of people

wanting to see the ghost, upset the atmosphere of my previous vigil."

St. Dunstan's now became an attraction for many curious sightseers. The way in which the ghost monks had caught the popular imagination, to the exclusion of the more serious examination of such phenomena which he had tried to encourage, greatly disappointed the vicar. He wrote in the parish magazine a few weeks later:

"I was rather afraid that the popular press would vulgarize the manifestations I described, but I was not prepared for the avalanche of letters which reached me from all parts of the world. Apparently every newspaper in the U.S.A. published a third-hand account. I was interested to hear from a former Sister here that the curate of her day (Mr. Boustead) saw similar phenomena, and from the Psychic Research Society to the effect that they have had St. Dunstan's monks on their records for over 12 years. They tell me that the manifestations occur in four-year cycles. As I suspected, more people have witnessed the phenomena than I knew."

The vicar continued: "May I repeat that, apart from the congregations, there are no spirits in the church. These visions are merely thought-pictures, televised by subtle rays, the nature of which are as yet unknown to scientists, but of course somewhere there is a personality responsible, consciously or unconsciously, for the vision. Please dissuade curious sightseers from visiting the church. The whole business is really very trivial and commonplace, and was only mentioned as an introduction to the more serious matter of my original article. . . ."

And he added, just by the way: "You may be interested to know that the 'radiation' was almost overpowering during the midnight Eucharist."

The vicar declined to allow more vigils in the church and did not refer to the monks again publicly for many months. When at last he did so the result only added to his disappointment and annoyance. In the January, 1948, parish magazine he told how he had been telephoned by a journalist "who asked if he might trespass on my valuable time for a chat. He came, and we talked for hours on the most fascinating subject of psychic phenomena, especially as related to religion and philosophy. At times we ascended into the heights of metaphysics and fourth dimensional thought, and both thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. . . ." The reporter was shown over the church and, said the vicar, "I made one stipulation about anything he might write, and he willingly agreed. It was that the subject should be kept a sacred subject and not written about lightly or sensationally. Some of you saw last Wednesday's paper and know how horribly the promise was broken. Not one so-called fact is true. There was no owl in the churchyard, no hand on a doorknob, no conversation with the organist, no mention about a 'violet monk' in church last Sunday, no stumbling, and no command from me to be quiet. There was no wind and no strange noises. . . ."

In spite of this unfortunate experience Mr. Anton-Stephens went ahead and published in the parish magazine some weeks later an article on confirmation headed "Supernatural," which he said had been dictated to him by the violet-hooded monk. It concerned the Te Deum and suggested how it might be altruistically expressed.

The vicar said he believed the violet-hooded figure to be the spirit of a monk who died in the ninth century. The monk had continued to appear and converse with him generally through the medium of his secretary, who conversed with the monk while

he wrote down the conversations. The monk, who had promised other contributions when he had time to take them down, always appeared at confirmation classes. The other monks had made no verbal communication, though they had now been seen by a number of parishioners.

There were also many skeptics among the parishioners; yet there were further incidents that could not be explained. One of those extremely skeptical about the ghosts was Mr. F. H. Harris, who as a churchwarden was frequently around the church with no one else present. Mr. Harris often said in a scoffing way that he had been locked up in the church alone hundreds of times, but the only noises he had heard were those of the pigeons pattering and fluttering about in the belfry. But very shortly before his death in 1948, he one day said to his wife, quite out of the blue, "You know, the vicar is right after all. There is something in that church—I've seen the monk." He also spoke of the incident to a local shopkeeper with whom he had been friendly for many years.

There were other incidents. R. N. G. Rowland, the St. Dunstan's organist, tells me: "One Sunday evening after service, I was leaning over the back pew side by side with another chorister, discussing music (not a word or thought about ghosts), and we were staring vaguely down the church towards the chancel. The only others in the church were the vicar, the verger and a warden, who were in the vicar's vestry. The nave was fairly well lit, the chancel in darkness. Quite suddenly, for no apparent reason, we stopped talking (we had been having an animated conversation) and stood silent gazing up into the chancel. I was aware of unseen activity there, and in a low voice said to my friend, 'Do you see anything?' He answered, 'No, but there's something going on in the chancel.'

I said, 'The vicar says that they hold services there.' 'Oh, the monks,' he replied. 'Yes, I believe it now. I didn't before, but I know they're there now.' "

On another occasion, with the vicar present, Mr. Rowland was conducting choir practice with his assistant at the organ. "We were rehearsing Stanford's 'And I saw another angel' for All Saints' tide. In one of the more lush, full passages, looking a few bars ahead, I saw a typical 'horn cue' in the organ accompaniment. I said to myself, 'Oh, for an orchestra to do this full justice.' At that moment we reached the 'horn cue' and I distinctly heard the two horns—an effect quite impossible to reproduce on the organ—singing out their parts above everybody else. After we had finished the anthem I said to the vicar, 'Well, if it goes like that on Sunday, we shan't have anything to worry about.' 'Yes, very good,' he replied, 'but you might not have the orchestra with you on Sunday.' 'What orchestra?' I asked, deliberately. 'Now really,' he said, 'you know as well as I do that you had a full *spirit* symphony orchestra out there in the chancel, playing along with you. Didn't you see them? *I* did.' 'No,' I replied, 'I did not see them.' 'Ah, but you knew they were there, didn't you?' he said. And somehow I could not deny it."

A former chorister tells me that Mr. Anton-Stephens continued to take the church phenomena so much as a matter of course that in the years following, most of his parishioners became quite as cool about it all, the nonbelievers because of their distaste for the subject and the others because they were quite prepared to believe, from the vicar's casual statements made from time to time, that he did indeed "see ghosts." He explained the four-year cycle of the twelve monks very simply as a buildup of spirit-energy in the church over this period which then manifested

itself in a fairly rapid series of appearances, and then lapsed to begin the buildup all over again. The violet-hooded monk, on the other hand, obeyed no definite cycle.

At all times during the remainder of his seventeen years' ministry at St. Dunstan's the vicar was perfectly open about the church phenomena. He did not, however, publish anything more ascribed to the violet-hooded monk, nor did he encourage further investigation of the church ghosts, because of the sensationalism which he so disliked.

Do the monks of St. Dunstan's still walk?

Mr. Rowland, the organist, tells me of an incident late in 1966:

"I went into church one evening, about half an hour before the boys' choir practice, to play the organ. The church door was open to allow the boys to enter as they arrived. After playing for some ten minutes I felt a movement behind me, as if someone had stepped into the choir stall and was standing behind my left shoulder. For a split second I assumed that one of the boys had arrived early, and I looked over my shoulder. There was no one to be seen—but there was certainly someone standing there. I had not stopped playing, and I just carried on, projecting a thought of 'Good evening—it's nice of you to come and listen to me.' I had no sense of fear or discomfort, rather a sense of elation. And until a boy came in a few minutes later and broke the spell, I know that whoever was standing there was emanating a feeling of pleasure and approval, and wanting me to go on playing because he was enjoying it so much."

It was only the moment after setting down this account of the incident for me that Mr. Rowland, to his own surprise, heard from a third party that two years earlier his son, an organ student, had had a similar

experience when playing the organ alone in St. Dunstan's.

"Avoiding leading questions, I asked my son about this at the next opportunity. He told me that on one occasion only, he sensed that someone was standing in the choir stall immediately behind his left shoulder. However, not liking the experience he immediately switched on all the chancel lights—to that moment only the organ lights were on—and the feeling passed."

St. Dunstan's, it would seem, might have its monks yet.

THE CURSE OF "THEM"

They are everywhere, dotted throughout the length and breadth of Ireland in mute testimony of the "old ones" who ruled the land in former times. They are raised circular earthworks, varying between 50 and 200 feet in diameter, often surrounded by a series of ditches or walls of earth in the form of concentric rings.

When they were first built, they must have been twenty feet high; but today, most have been eroded by the merciless ravages of time and weather. With impenetrable thorn bushes girdling their crests, they must have provided an effective means of defense; and each one was built in such a way that it com-

manded a view of at least two others. Sometimes, they were even linked by underground passages, enabling reinforcements to pass quickly from one to the other.

In Irish, they are known as "raths;" the archeologists call them simply "hill forts." Yet who actually built them has always been something of a mystery; at one time, it was thought that the builders were Danish or Norse invaders, but this theory is now known to be incorrect. They date back, perhaps even centuries, before the Bronze Age, and their origins are lost forever in the mists of time.

Whenever you find a hill fort in Ireland, you find strong superstition among the country people who live nearby. And the superstition attached to the forts is not one bred from ignorance and stupidity—far from it. It is as old as man's memory, born of dark tales of savagery and bloodshed in the days long ago, when men fought and screamed and died as they milled in battle around those forts. Even today, no Irishman in his right senses would disturb a rath or try to level it, even though it might be occupying ground which could be put to good agricultural use. They are protected by law as part of Ireland's national heritage, but the law is unnecessary, because ancient superstitions die hard, particularly in the minds of Celtic races.

James Mahoney was as good an Irishman as any of his neighbors, there was no denying that. He scratched a precarious living on a small farm in Limerick and, although his seven children often wore cast-off clothes, they were always well fed. It wasn't that Mahoney's land was infertile; quite the opposite. Yet as long as Mahoney had enough ready cash to feed his family, plus a spare shilling or two to buy some beer and tobacco, he was a contented man. He couldn't see

the point of breaking his back with hard work seven days a week just so he could be more prosperous than the next man.

However, rumor has it that it was his wife who drove him to do an act which had far-reaching consequences and maybe they were right. Not far from Mahoney's cottage, by the side of the road leading to Ballingarry, there was a circular hill fort—and Mahoney's wife thought that its soil could be put to good use in the building of an earthen bank between two small fields. Mahoney had been meaning to build the bank for some time, but, conveniently for his dislike of hard work, he had always complained that there was no soil to spare. The idea of using the ancient rath had never entered his head, but faced with his wife's persistent nagging, he was prepared to consider anything.

One morning, helped by a laborer—a stranger in the country who was too dull-witted even to be superstitious—he took his spade and launched a vigorous attack on the fort. His neighbors looked on in horrified disbelief; there were meaningful glances and dark mutterings about what had happened only a couple of years earlier, when a building firm in Limerick City had thought of putting up thirty new houses just up the road at Ballynanty Beg. The trouble was that these builders had planned to level a hill fort which stood on the proposed site; after three or four workmen had suddenly and mysteriously fallen ill, the rest had gone on strike and refused to go near the fort. The houses had been built somewhere else and the fort remained unmolested.

So, when Mahoney himself fell ill a few days later, nobody was at all surprised; nor did his neighbors think it in any way strange when the sickness spread to his wife and then to each of his seven chil-

dren in turn. In fact, the only person who was puzzled—and alarmed—was the doctor. At first, he had thought that the Mahoneys were suffering from influenza, but a more thorough diagnosis proved that this was not so. Every member of the family was in the grip of some kind of fever, accompanied by an unaccountable weakness—yet laboratory examinations and blood tests failed to reveal anything wrong at all. Stranger still, the man who had been helping Mahoney was also affected—but his sympoms were even more acute. After failing to make a diagnosis, the doctor had had him taken to a hospital, where he was being kept under observation.

Days went by, but neither the Mahoneys nor the laborer showed any signs of improvement. Curiously enough, however, a neighbor who came in to look after the sick family remained perfectly healthy, even though the strange sickness appeared to be infectious.

It was Mahoney's brother-in-law who had the bright idea. It came to him in a flash one night in the local bar, after his fourth pint of stout. The trouble had started, he reflected, when Mahoney had begun to remove the soil from the hill fort. Therefore, he reasoned, might not the answer be to put the soil back again? At least it was worth a try.

The following day, assisted by a group of friends, he set to work carting back all the earth which Mahoney had removed. Before long, the hole in the fort had been completely filled and new turf concealed the excavation. Satisfied the workmen retired to the bar for a few well earned "jars."

Within hours, Mahoney and his family began to show signs of improvement, as did the laborer who was in the hospital. Then several days later, they had made a full recovery and were up and about again.

The doctor who had been attending the Mahoneys

was completely baffled. As a man of science, he flatly refused to accept the theory that the family's strange illness had been caused by any kind of supernatural agent—fairies, leprechauns, or otherwise. His theory was that by distracting soil which had remained untouched for literally thousands of years, Mahoney and his laborer had become infected by some kind of bacteria or virus unknown to modern science—which Mahoney had passed on to the other members of his family.

But if this was so, why had those who had been visiting the Mahoneys not been affected in a similar way? And why had Mahoney's brother-in-law and the men who had helped him replace the earth failed to pick up the infection?

Perhaps, on the other hand, it had been a purely psychological illness, some outward manifestation of the subconscious mind's centuries' old, ingrained superstition. It was the only logical explanation that might account for the fact that the affected people had started to get well almost as soon as the damage to the fort had been repaired.

To Mahoney's neighbors, however, the explanation was far more simple. "They"—the mysterious spirits who inhabited the rath—had simply objected to the rath being disturbed and had taken their revenge on the men responsible. It was an explanation that Mahoney himself accepted, and he had learned his lesson. He would build his wall of stones, instead of earth, so that "They" would have no cause to trouble him again.

THE CURSE OF "SOLOMAN'S TREASURE"

The expedition set out from Cape Town early in 1959 and made its way northwards into the blistering desert of South-West Africa, where series of plateaus, swept by arid winds, have gained the reputation as one of the most inhospitable areas in the world. The atmosphere is brooding and uncanny, as though the whole land is waiting for some grim event; as, indeed, it has been waiting virtually unchanged for a million years.

Along the western boundary, the Atlantic surges over 1,000 miles of coast: the dreaded "skeleton coast," which is littered with the wreckage of once-proud ships and the bones of sailors.

There could only be one reason why men would venture into this wilderness, inhabited only by primitive bushmen—and that's treasure! For somewhere in that trackless waste lies a great hoard of gold and precious stones, a vast storehouse of riches that legend calls "Solomon's Treasure."

Five times, since 1949, expeditions have set out into the desert in search of the hoard. This latest group, made up of six Americans, was equipped with all the modern aids to desert travel. They were determined not to make any mistakes; the other four expeditions had made errors, and they had perished. According

to the local tribes, the treasure was cursed, and the curse extended to anyone who went after it. That, of course, was nonsense—or so the Americans said.

A centuries-old curse, even if there really was one, couldn't do any harm; it was human error that had brought disaster to the previous expeditions. Nevertheless. . . .

The story of the long search for "Solomon's Treasure" began in 1909 and the man who started it all, an Englishman named Fred Cornell, had come to South Africa bent on making his fortune in the diamond fields. In the course of his wanderings through West Africa, he came to a region known as the Koa Valley. It was a place where the temperature soared to a blistering 140 degrees at noon, there was practically no drinking-water, and into the bargain, the area was infested by poisonous snakes, wild animals and bushmen armed with poison-tipped arrows.

From a missionary, Cornell had heard a tale of natives who wore precious stones around their necks and who brought large gold nuggets with them out of the desert. Cornell was also told about the legend of the treasure and saw a very old map which had been tucked away in a forgotten corner of the mission station for years. On the map, which had been compiled by a long-dead missionary from information supplied by the bushmen, there was depicted a cave marked with a cross.

For thirteen years Cornell combed the arid Koa Valley, searching for the elusive cave, convinced that somewhere out there in the desert, a fabulous treasure had been lying buried for thousands of years. He drove himself on mercilessly, undergoing torments of thirst, fever, hunger and sickness in his efforts to find it.

He had almost given up hope when one day in

March, 1923, he stumbled unexpectedly on a deep shaft. Peering down, he could see nothing but darkness. To attempt a lone descent would mean risking serious injury or death; Cornell needed help. Pinpointing the location of the shaft, he headed back to Cape Town, a distance of 450 miles, which he covered entirely on foot. There, he discovered that no reliable map existed of the area where he had made his find; it was a different spot from the one indicated on the old mission map. This part of the desert was completely unknown to the white man.

After a lengthy search, Cornell found a partner, Gerd Toit, who was willing to risk the perils of the desert for the sake of what might be an enormous reward. They set out together, resolving that they would divide the treasure, if there was any, equally between them.

But Toit was destined never to see the gold and jewels he coveted, for they had reached a point some 250 miles from Cape Town, roughly halfway to their destination, when a snake sank its fangs into Toit's foot and he died in agony a few hours later. Cornell went back to the Cape alone.

It was 1928 before Cornell managed to return to the shaft, this time in the company of a Dutchman named Van Bleek. Fastening a rope around a sturdy tree-trunk, Cornell began the cautious descent into the gloom.

The shaft was nearly 150 feet deep and it seemed an age before his feet at last touched the bottom. Eagerly, he shone his lamp around the walls. . . .

A series of caves radiated out from the base of the shaft, and Cornell felt a profound sense of awe as he thought of the long-dead men who had hacked them painstakingly from the solid rock. Then he shone his lamp into one of the caves—and his senses reeled.

Everywhere, picked out by the lamp's rays, precious stones glittered and shone as brightly as they had done on the day when they were stored away, so many centuries ago.

Cornell let out a yell of triumph and did a crazy dance at the bottom of the shaft, laughing and crying at the same time. Filling his pockets with diamonds and gold nuggets, he scrambled up the rope and flopped exhausted over the edge of the shaft. It was minutes before he was able to break the news of what he had found to the excited Dutchman.

As soon as he made out what Cornell was trying to tell him, Van Bleek went down the rope in turn to see for himself—and it was then that tragedy struck a second time. Cornell heard only a scream, followed by a faint thud. Running to the edge of the shaft, he hauled up the rope. It had snapped.

There was no spare; no way of going down into the pit to help Van Bleek, even assuming that he was still alive. Cornell stayed by the side of the shaft for two days, but no sound came from it. Van Bleek was dead. At last, with a leaden heart, Cornell set out on the long trek back to the Cape.

A few weeks later Cornell sailed for England, and in London, he sought financiers who would be willing to back a large expedition to remove the treasure from the caves. His gold nuggets and diamonds underwent a thorough examination by numerous experts. Nothing quite like them had ever been found on the diamond fields; it seemed certain that Cornell had stumbled on treasure of fantastic value.

Cornell had no difficulty in raising enough funds for his next expedition. It was with a light heart that he left the bank one morning and hailed a taxi, telling the driver to take him to the nearest post office, where he intended to send a few telegrams.

He never reached his destination. The taxi was involved in a collision and Cornell, who might have become the richest man in the world, was killed instantly.

He took his secret with him to the grave. Only a few rough diamonds and lumps of gold remained as testimony that he had once feasted his eyes on riches beyond imagination. No more have been found, though not for want of trying. Five successive expeditions set out on the quest in the years after the Second World War; four of them, badly equipped and ill-prepared, perished in the wilderness.

The fifth, the American expedition of 1959, got off to a better start; but after weeks of fruitless searching in the desert the six men, all suffering from fever and exhaustion, were forced to abandon the attempt.

And so the mystery remains. Is there really a lost mine filled with the greatest treasure the world has ever seen out there in the middle of the desert?

Or was it all a figment of Cornell's imagination?

But if it was, how did he get hold of a fistful of gold nuggets and diamonds?

Dotted here and there in the West African desert, buried in drifting sand, lie the ruins of what must have been proud cities. Who built them and lived in them is a mystery, for these people appear to have vanished off the face of the Earth.

Perhaps the treasure was theirs; perhaps in some strange way it really does carry a black curse, which insures that it will lie undisturbed throughout eternity.

A YORKSHIRE HAUNTING

There's an uncanny atmosphere about Yorkshire and its flat, often savage, landscape which seems to encourage ghost stories. The famous York Museum ghost is one, the apparition of an old librarian which haunted Leeds Library is another, and there are several Yorkshire houses where strange noises and unexplained movements have sent the ghost stories spreading through the county like wildfire.

One of them is the now rather shabby old Victorian house at 34 Grove Place, Ousedale, a small market town in the East Riding. As T. H. Hall, a well-known psychical researcher, drove up to the house on February 1, 1956, he may well have thought that its appearance alone was full of portent. It was a cold day, the coldest of the century, in the south of England and in Leeds, a marrow-chilling temperature of 20 degrees below zero had been recorded.

When Hall arrived at his destination to try to "lay the ghost," a frosty glow pinpointed the sagging roof, with its slates buckled from chimney to gutter and the crooked first floor window. Inside the house, it seemed that some force had twisted it out of true, with sloping lintels, cracked walls and distorted doors.

Refreshingly, though, Hall found that the occupants of the house were unemotional, sensible people, not given to hallucinations or possessing over-active im-

aginations. Although they had all been badly frightened by what they had seen and heard, most of them had at first dismissed the idea of their house being haunted.

At least, they did until investigations by a builder and a plumber and technicians from the gas, electricity and water supply companies could find nothing structurally wrong with the premises.

What had happened seemed all the stranger, because Dr. J. Morgan, his partner Dr. Seymour, their wives and Nurse Fisher had lived at Nos. 34 and 36 Grove Place for 28 years. And none of them had heard anything out of the ordinary, until one day in November, 1955, when loud bangs and muffled explosions were heard.

Nurse Fisher and Mary O'Neil, the maid were startled, but thought the noises must have come from the surveyors' offices in No. 32. With all the typewriters and filing cabinets this firm had there it seemed a likely cause.

So, satisfied with this explanation, the two women largely ignored the noises, which continued for several days, before stopping as suddenly as they had begun.

For two weeks, no further noises were heard. Then about nine o'clock one evening at the beginning of December, it all started again . . . and, this time, even more loudly than before.

Nurse Fisher and Mary were normally cheerful, down-to-earth people, but the same thought had struck them: why had the noises returned, far worse than before, when the office next door was closed? They knew that there was no caretaker there.

Thoroughly frightened, the women rushed through the communicating door into No. 36 and told Dr. and Mrs. Seymour what they had heard.

Seymour, a practical man and a brilliant doctor, immediately phoned Mark Jackson, the manager of the office from which the disturbance was coming and together they searched the building. But there was nothing that could possibly have explained what had happened.

Then, as time passed and the noises continued, a certain coincidence seemed to do more than just hint at the supranormal. The explosions, rumblings, and slammings that rang out from the walls ceased whenever Mary O'Neil was not in the house.

It did not escape the doctor's attention either, that Mary looked a good deal younger than her 26 years and he knew that poltergeist outbreaks had always been associated with young girls of about 15 or 16.

Even more sinister were two occasions when Mary had returned to the house from Hull, where she went every weekend to see her fiancé, to be greeted by a fresh set of bangings coming from the walls.

It first happened on December 28, 1955, the day when the maid's Christmas holiday ended. She reached No. 34 in the early evening and immediately asked whether any noises had been heard in the five days she had been away. The words were hardly out of her mouth when the uproar began, as if to assure her that whatever was causing them was still there.

Any ideas of this being mere coincidence seemed dispelled when it happened a second time, three weeks later. On Sunday, January 15, Mary came back from Hull at 10 P.M. and, once again, the noises broke their weekend silence to reverberate so loudly that Dr. Seymour sent for the police. When they arrived an hour later, the rumblings and bangings were still going on. Once again, the office next door was searched and, once again, nothing was found.

On the following day, January 16, the most frightening of the manifestations was experienced.

At half past ten that evening, Mary O'Neil was in bed, when suddenly new noises started, deep growlings this time and menacing echoes, as if some mighty, terrible force was stirring beneath the house and preparing to erupt.

Mary felt the bed shaking violently and, in the bathroom, Nurse Fisher saw the floor heave, saw a scent bottle tumble from Mary's dressing table as the whole house seemed to be vibrating.

The two women begged Dr. Seymour to allow them to sleep in his house and when they began to do so, on January 19, the noises stopped. Though she was only next door, Mary O'Neil was out of the house and her absence yet again seemed to quiet the restless spirits.

But not for long. Ten days later, the sounds began again, building up to a terrifying crescendo on February 1 when they spread to the offices at No. 32. Every few seconds, as witnesses on both sides of the wall between the houses stood and listened, there were scraping and tearing noises as if some force was trying to rip its way to freedom.

For half an hour the witnesses waited, expecting to see some hideous vision emerge before their eyes, but to their relief the wall remained intact and by early afternoon, the sounds had once more ceased.

They had barely done so when the telephone rang at No. 34. It was for Mary: her mother was seriously ill and the girl left the house within the hour. She was never to live there again and, with her departure, the noises ceased completely and were never heard again.

By the time T. H. Hall arrived at the house, that same evening, the haunting of Grove Place was over.

Yet, what was the explanation? If, that is, there was one?

What is certain is, the noises were not a practical joke on the part of Mary O'Neil. It wasn't the sort of thing she would do in the first place and, secondly, she had been under constant surveillance by the other witnesses when the various "hauntings" were taking place.

By the time the plumber and the gas, electricity and water board inspectors had checked the house, they found nothing that could have been the cause. Dr. Morgan had been convinced that No. 34 was indeed haunted and, on January 26, when the noises began building up to their last tremendous manifestation, he had invited psychical researcher T. H. Hall and E. J. Dingwall, to come and investigate.

Hall knew that ever since 1897, it had been realized that the movement of underground water was responsible for many supposed hauntings. It was significant that the River Ouse flowed past only 300 yards away and that the cellar of No. 34 had often been flooded.

Hall found that on November 15, 1955, about the time when the noises were first heard, the high tide had reached 21 feet: maximum high water had been at nine o'clock in the morning, only about two hours before the noises started.

The next high tide had been at about half past nine on the 1st of December, the very day when the bangings returned after a silence of two weeks.

Then, it was found that the tide had been rising right through the Christmas holiday, to over 21 feet, on December 28, the day on which Mary O'Neil returned. On January 15 and 16, when the noises were at their most frightening, high water had reached over 20 feet on the second evening and about the same on January 26 and February 1.

The underground water theory seemed a safe bet, when it was realized that on February 1, the temperature had been below freezing point. The sea had frozen at Bridlington and it was reasonable to assume that the sub-zero temperatures had caused the underground water to freeze, too. Hence, the sudden cessation of the noises on that day.

Hall found, too, that out of the eleven weekends during the period of the haunting, eight had fallen during a period of low tides. The fact that Mary O'Neil had been out of the house on each of the eight occasions and that the noises had been heard on Sunday, January 16 as soon as Mary returned to the house—all this was coincidence.

But *was* it? How much coincidence can there be before another, more sinister, explanation seems indicated? It could have been coincidence that the noises started again on December 28 but could such an occurrence happen *twice?*

And, if there was no haunting at No. 34 between November, 1955, and February, 1956, why had the noises never been heard before? Why were they never heard again, after Mary O'Neil left the house forever? Why, too, had it happened only at No. 34?

After all, Grove Place was a row of terrace houses, so why was this the only house that had been affected by subsidence if something supernatural had *not* been at work? For none of the other buildings suffered so much from cracks in the walls or distorted window frames and doorways.

Yet, another question remains unanswered and cannot be explained away by the underground water theory: what happened when the water melted after the great freeze of February 1? The Ouse still rose and fell that spring and throughout every year that followed, but the noises were never heard again.

One fact that could point to Mary O'Neil as the unwitting cause of it all was that in September, 1955, she came to *live* at No. 34 after seven years of acting as a *daily* maid. There had been a succession of resident maids before her . . . but doesn't it seem likely that there was something special about Mary, since the noises occurred only during the time *she* was living there?

Could the cessation of the noises have had anything to do with the approach of psychical investigator Hall on that very same day, February 1? One wonders . . .

Of course, the truth about these happenings will never—*can* never—be fully known, but there is always the choice between explanations: natural or supernatural? A succession of pure coincidence, or the restless stirrings of spirits?

Whatever it was, it has remained one of the greatest enigmas Yorkshire has ever known.

GHOSTS BY CANDLELIGHT

Even today few cars pass through the picturesque Hertfordshire village of Buntingford, for although it lies less than a dozen miles from the university town of Cambridge, Buntingford is rather off the beaten track. Yet, the attractive fifteenth century coaching inn that dominates the high street is truly a remarkable building in more ways than one. Its charm alone makes it

worth more than a second glance, yet for many years now it has attracted the curiosity of both architects and psychical investigators; and although the interests of the one are in no way connected with those of the other, they are curiously complemented.

For the Old Bell Coaching House was the scene of a remarkable manifestation less than twenty years ago. And from the moment one enters the low doorways leading into the bars from the coach yard, one cannot help but sense that there is an extremely curious history about the place.

This architectural riddle, with its stairways and winding passages, its unusually wide cavities between the walls and the puzzling depths beneath the stairs, was built over 500 years ago. And for many years the two wide channels that ran parallel inside the walls with the chimney were mysterious in themselves—until it was learned that they led to a "priest's hole."

The hauntings, however, did not really begin in earnest until just after the second world war, when John Parker bought the inn and moved in with his family. Although there had been a great many whispered rumors about a woman ghost for more years than anybody could remember, nobody could ever admit to having seen her. Then a few weeks after the Parkers moved in another ghost was seen. This time it was a man in black who always appeared on the staircase at breakfast time! And then, the phantom footsteps began. . . .

These were clearly heard walking along the landing and up and down the stairs, some of the steps having a dragging sound; and "something" would knock or scratch at the door, but on opening it they would find nothing there. These incidents happened at all times during the day as well as at night; as Mrs. Park-

er said, "We've heard them at seven in the morning and at tea time."

The elder of her three sons, who was in his twenties, had a frightening experience in one of the rooms. He said afterwards, "I woke up during the night and could not move. I knew I was awake because I could see the room and the window, but it seemed as if there was a great weight pressing on me. I struggled to get up, but couldn't. At last I had the idea of trying to roll from under the weight, and after what seemed like hours I managed to do it."

He was found next morning fast asleep, lying half out of the window.

On another occasion Mrs. Parker's teenage son, who was over six feet tall, was found crouching in the fireplace the length of the room away from his bed. He did not remember anything during the night or how he got there, and he had never before walked in his sleep.

Another tenant, Leslie Wells, who lived at the other end of the building, often heard footsteps going up and down the stairs leading to his room. One night he heard a sound which he described as "like an old woman crying softly."

Once, too, a visitor to Mr. Wells's room left it suddenly, saying he could "feel something."

The other tenant of Bell House, Tony Fruin, awoke one night with the sensation of hands around his neck, and sat up on the bed fighting to get his breath.

A Canadian friend of Fruin's, described as "a real tough guy," went to sleep one night in the room containing the huge fireplace with its priest's hole. Next morning the room was empty and the friend was found in another room. He would give no explanation for his behavior but refused to sleep in the room with the fireplace again.

Another time when a friend of Parker's called to see him, Parker asked his caller to stay on while he went out, but he returned to find to his surprise that the friend had vanished. When he met the friend again some time later, the man said he had had to leave as he could not stay on any longer in the house alone because of the clanking of chains and other uncanny noises.

On investigation it was found that some of the noises from the chimney were due to a chain, possibly used for turning a spit or giving access to the priest's hole, rattling when the wind blew, but this did not account for the other strange noises and footsteps which continued to sound throughout the old building, and other frightening incidents—such as when Mrs. Parker and her daughter, alone in their big living room, heard feet coming down the passage and saw the door handle turn. When they threw open the door there was nothing there, as usual.

In early June, 1949, when the local newspaper investigated the ghosts of Bell House, the hauntings had been going on for nearly two years. A writer for the newspaper and his colleague persuaded Mrs. Parker and her elder son, together with Wells and Fruin, to join them in experimenting with the upturned glass. As the writer explained, "We did not enter into it frivolously, but neither were in dead earnestness. Our one concession to ghost etiquette was candlelight; otherwise we were just a group of ordinary, curious people."

The story the glass told them was a strange one. It began moving almost immediately, and the first "spirit" to give a message, calling itself Hugh, stayed long enough to tell the sitters that many spirits wandered through the old house. Then the glass spelled out the name of Hannah Bedwell. The house, said Hannah,

had once been the Bell Inn, and she had worked there. In reply to questions she said she haunted the house and "was there always." The sitters questioned her closely.

"Why do you haunt the house?"
"I am not free to do else."
"Why are you not free?"
"I search."
"For whom do you search?"
"For myself and another."
"Who is the other?"
"My littling."

The sitters could not understand this and asked Hannah for its meaning. She answered "My child."

"Do you search for your child in this house?"
"Yes, with lamenting."
"Did your child die?"
"Woefully."
"How?"
"I lay upon her."
"Why?"
"I was afraid."
"Of whom were you afraid?"
"My mistress."
"Why?"
"Because she would turn me off."

Hannah went on to say that she lay on her child in the end room in the west; apparently Mr. Wells's room, in which he had heard a woman sobbing. Hannah said she was born at Reed, some four miles north of Buntingford, and when asked if the house was still there, she replied "fields." Her father was an ostler at the inn, and the innkeeper's name was White. Asked what sort of people came to the inn, she replied, "Bawds and cutpurses."

"Who was your child's father?"

"John Price, porter here."
"How old were you?"
"Fifteen summers."
"What happened to Price?"
"Killed."
"Where?"
"Leyston fields."
"By whom?"
"Lame Robert."

At first the sitters thought she said "Lane Robert," giving the name the wrong way around. They pressed the point and she said, "Twist leg." Lame Robert, she said, was a footpad.

"How did you die, Hannah?"
"The noose."
"Where?"
"At Newgate."
"Were you imprisoned?"
"Bedford jail."
"How long?"
"Months."
"Are there other spirits in the house?"
"Many."
"Are they happy?"
"No, all unquiet."

As a result of this report a group of interested people checked back on "Hannah Bedwell" in old parish records and found mention of her baby's birth, also a record of her conviction for infanticide.

As in many cases where a haunting is established, Parker was approached by several people wanting to buy Bell House and its ghosts, and, eventually he sold it for a very handsome profit.

Another instance of the upturned glass being used to try and identify a ghost occurred in Ludlow in

1954, and again it was a building more than 400 years old that was the scene of the hauntings. This was the Globe Hotel, standing in the oldest quarter of the Shropshire town, within a few hundred yards of Ludlow Castle.

Airman John Stokes and his wife moved into a flat above the hotel in Market Street in January, 1954, and the first strange incident occurred only a month afterwards. One night the couple had gone to bed when they heard a noise in a bedroom on the floor above. On making inquiries next day they discovered that the room was unoccupied. But the same noise from it occurred on another night, and then again on the staircase outside their room, yet each time when they investigated they could find no one, nor anything capable of creating such a disturbance.

Later that year another Royal Air Force man, David Thomas, with his wife and child moved into an adjoining flat. Immediately, the new couple experienced similar happenings, and the hauntings intensified. One evening while their husbands were on duty at the nearby R.A.F. camp, Mrs. Stokes and Mrs. Thomas were sitting together in the living room of one of the flats, when they had a sudden presentiment of fear. A chill seemed to come into the room, though the fire was burning in the hearth, and when Mrs. Thomas looked towards the door she saw the figure of a man standing there. He had a cloak flung around his body and wore a wig. His features were indistinguishable.

Mrs. Thomas was petrified with horror and fear, while her companion was so scared that she dared not look around. After a minute or two the figure vanished.

When the husbands returned that evening the two wives told them of their frightening experience, at

which the men decided they would all spend the evening together. Shortly after ten o'clock all four heard a knocking on the staircase and turned to look at the doorway. A light knock was heard on the door, and Mr. Thomas opened it. Although he could see there was no one there, the knocking on the door continued, and as he stepped back into the room the others saw something pass by the aperture in the doorway.

In the following days the two couples continued to hear strange noises and there were instances of articles being moved from one side of the room to another by some unseen hand. The couples did not say much about the unusual happenings as they were afraid of ridicule, but on making tentative inquiries they found that former tenants above the Globe had experienced similar things. One woman who had occupied the Stokes's flat told the young couple that when living there she had the frightening experience of waking up and seeing a figure standing near her bed. It disappeared as she looked.

It was then that the two families decided to try the upturned glass. It spelled out several messages and when they asked the ghost's name, the reply came that it was "Edward Dobsod" and that he was a soldier at Ludlow Castle, who had died in a room on the other side of the landing to the flats in the year 1513.

Both couples tried not to allow the experiences to affect their nerves, but they looked for other accommodation.

A few years later, in 1959, the ghost of the Globe was reported again, this time in the hotel lounge. A Birmingham woman on holiday told how she was sitting alone in the lounge when she suddenly felt someone breathing down her neck. She turned quickly,

fully expecting to see someone behind the chair, but there was no one else in the room.

Other odd things happened. Doors locked themselves and lights were switched on and off by unseen hands.

The hotel's regular customers were not unduly concerned. Accepting that some uncanny presence was active, they simply called the ghost "Joe" and blamed the slightest mishap on him.

FEUD WITH A VOODOO WOMAN

The "Millionaire's Playground" in the Bahamas has a well-deserved reputation for being one of the gayest tourist attractions in the world, with its sunshine, golden beaches, luxury hotels and the ubiquitous calypso bands.

But there's one aspect to this part of the world that few visitors are really aware of . . . the terror of the cult they call the Voodoo. When Charles MacRae arrived in New Providence from Scotland in 1936 about the only knowledge he had about voodoo was "it was something the natives were afraid of."

Yet within a short space of time, MacRae's own experience was to show him that the local people had every reason to be afraid—because MacRae was soon to share their fear.

The reason he arrived in the islands was to take

over the lucrative post as manager in one of the newest nightclubs in the capital and, with twenty years of showbusiness experience behind him, this shrewd Scotsman certainly knew the ropes. And part of the new club's spectacular success was due to the big-name acts he flew in from Britain.

One evening, six months after his arrival in New Providence, MacRae was sitting in his office when Rohan, his servant and handyman, announced a visitor. In waddled a fat native woman whom MacRae judged to be about sixty years old.

She introduced herself as the mother of the owner of the Green Cockatoo, a rival nightclub in the same street, which had suffered from competition with MacRae's club. The old woman wanted MacRae to join forces with them but he refused, explaining that his contract still had eighteen months to run.

As he ushered the woman out she turned, glared menacingly at him and spat out a torrent of native dialect. After she had gone, he asked Rohan what she had said.

The servant shuffled his feet uncomfortably. The woman was very angry, he told MacRae, and she had put a voodoo bad luck spell on him.

MacRae smiled. He did not intend to be scared off by a cult based on fear, superstition and ignorance.

He had already forgotten the incident when, later that evening, the light in his office went out without warning. MacRae struck a match and found a candle stump which he lit, then as he made his way down the basement steps, he stumbled and twisted an ankle. However, he managed to hobble to a cupboard and examined the fuses. They seemed in perfect order. MacRae left electricians to investigate as he limped painfully up the steps to supervise emergency arrangements in the blacked-out kitchen and restaurant.

The electricians worked late into the night without being able to trace *any* fault in fuses, wires, connections or junction-box, and when they left, the electricity supply was still cut off.

Next morning, however, it was working as usual, but the cause of the stoppage remained a complete mystery. Later that morning, he received two telegrams. One was from Manchester and one from London. They canceled appearances, due to sudden illness, of two independent acts he had booked for the club.

As a replacement, MacRae decided to book a local Calypso group. When he went to his car, he found the tires had been slashed, the license plates defaced and the side window forced. Although there were other valuables in the car, the only article missing was a silk cravat he often wore. When he mentioned the missing scarf to Rohan, the native looked distinctly uneasy.

While the car was being repaired, MacRae hired another one and went to see the Calypso group's agent. For some reason, the man was nervous and ill at ease, protesting that the group was already booked for the period in question—*before MacRae had even mentioned dates*. He continued to shake his head nervously when MacRae offered to pay a handsome bonus on top of the usual fee.

Baffled, the Scotsman drove away. He could not deny that since his recent visitor and her voodoo curse, he'd had an unprecedented run of bad luck. Still, he convinced himself, it was nothing more than a coincidence. Surely the mystical power of voodoo couldn't reach out the thousands of miles to Britain and strike down the two acts he'd booked there? The very idea was preposterous. . . .

Thoroughly disgruntled, he composed an angry cable to the London agent, demanding a replacement act.

He gave the cable to Rohan, then asked conversationally what form this particular voodoo curse would take. Rohan explained that anyone who helped MacRae would in turn be involved in the curse. That explained why the agent this morning hadn't wanted to cooperate.

Then Rohan blurted out that he hadn't told MacRae everything. The particular curse invoked was not just for bad luck . . . it was a death curse!

Despite the tropical warmth, MacRae felt a slight chill. Later, he walked out with Rohan to the car and was about to get behind the steering wheel when Rohan stopped him and pointed to the driver's seat. There was a thick covering of a strange black powder on it.

Rohan told his boss to stand well back, then slowly and thoroughly blew every particle of powder onto the road. Finally, he solemnly urinated over the area on which the powder had landed. He assured MacRae that if no contact was made between the powder and the intended victim, then that particular voodoo spell was powerless.

But to be sure, he said MacRae would have to take a new-laid egg, pass it around his body three times, then throw it as far as possible over his shoulder.

Feeling rather sheepish, MacRae did as he was instructed and Rohan warned him that the witch would try again and to be on the look-out at all times for the black powder.

Business at the club dropped off considerably. A week later, while MacRae was in bed, he felt an excruciating pain in the back of his head and in his neck. He lay white-faced, almost paralyzed with pain and yelled for Rohan, who could only mop the sweat from his brow and wait for MacRae's doctor to arrive.

The doctor was noncommittal about MacRae's illness

and, apart from prescribing aspirin, he contented himself with taking a blood sample.

Throughout that long night, MacRae felt certain he was going to die. Rohan had little difficulty in persuading him to call in a "curse lifter" he knew, to combat what he was sure was another voodoo attack.

This curse lifter, also known as the "Black Witch," was a native of Haiti who lived nearby.

Shortly afterwards, Rohan brought in the tiny, deformed and toothless Black Witch. She squatted native-fashion in the bedroom and with Rohan interpreting, she asked MacRae for a coin. She told him to hold it close to his mouth, speak some words on it, then lay it on the floor beside the bed. He did this.

The Black Witch then lifted the coin by means of two sticks and placed it in the center of the floor. Rohan explained that she did not touch the coin with her hands because it would destroy MacRae's vibrations, which had been transmitted to it.

Reaching into a pocket the Black Witch took two long strings of beads, cast them on the floor around the coin and stared at them intently, reading the oracle for him.

Then, chanting in a sing-song voice, the woman said the spell had been cast by a voodoo woman who had used MacRae's silk scarf and buried it with certain other objects. She described the rival club owner's mother in great detail and said she had already made two other attempts on MacRae's life. However, the Black Witch assured him that *her* voodoo magic was more powerful than the other woman's.

To start with, she gave MacRae an evil-smelling concoction to drink. Then, she explained, she would have to make up a special amulet for his protection against further attacks.

She drew a weird pattern on a piece of paper which

she told MacRae to put in his shoe. This paper represented his enemies, she explained. The idea was that he would be trampling them underfoot. The overall charge was fifty dollars.

But MacRae, who realized that the pain had almost gone, would gladly have paid her a hundred times that amount.

Two days later, he felt well enough to start work again and Rohan brought him the powerful amulet, comprising "a piece of lion, panther, elephant, hyena" and special unnamed ingredients, all of which were tied together and attached to a string for MacRae to wear around his neck at all times.

MacRae no longer scoffed at the idea of voodoo having supernatural powers. For during his illness, he read books about it, discussed various aspects with Rohan and started to keep a diary on which this account is based. Certain mysterious incidents which had puzzled him in the past, began to fall into place. When he brought up the subject with white settlers, he found that those who scoffed were in the minority and were almost without exception newcomers to the island. But those who had lived from childhood in the Bahamas either kept an open mind or accepted the supernatural forces of voodoo as a reality. Often they had authenticated stories to match MacRae's own.

Gradually business in the club started to pick up. MacRae phoned a theatrical agent in Miami and arranged to pay him a quick visit, auditioning some acts. There was a good and regular flying boat service to the American mainland, and MacRae planned to fly out on a Wednesday morning and return the next evening.

But he certainly hadn't had a chance to mention his midweek arrangements to Rohan before his servant

appeared with the Haitian Black Witch, who had an important message for MacRae.

Through Rohan, she told MacRae it was dangerous for him to fly. And if he had to fly, on no account must he travel on a Wednesday.

MacRae sat speechless. He had discussed his trip with no one except the agent in Miami. Even the telephone call didn't go through a local exchange. So how on earth *could* she have known?

Reluctantly, MacRae cabled the agent, changing the arrangements. Days later, when he had practically forgotten the incident, Rohan brought in a newspaper and placed it on his desk. The headlines told of a plane missing in a sudden storm—the plane MacRae had arranged to take!

The next incident happened three weeks later. MacRae was interested in acquiring a club in one of the other islands and was to take a morning steamer over. But for some reason, his alarm clock failed to go off, and when he woke, he found he had barely a quarter of an hour to catch the boat.

He felt angry with himself for omitting to wind and set the alarm. However, when he checked, he found the alarm was set as usual—it just hadn't gone off!

MacRae reached the docks with two minutes to spare, but as he walked quickly down the steps, he was gripped by the shoulder from behind and pushed. Surprised, he spun around as he fell, expecting to see his attacker. No one was there. He was taken to a hospital suffering from a back injury and a broken leg.

Next day, MacRae had three visitors. The first was the ship's pilot, who, after the usual pleasantries, told MacRae he had watched him come down the steps. "It's a curious thing," the pilot remarked. "It looked for all the world as if someone had pushed you. Yet there was no one within twenty yards."

The second visitor was Rohan, who brought the amulet which MacRae had left under the pillow in his rush to get out the previous day.

Later, he returned with the Black Witch and she had read the oracle again. The voodoo woman had tried to attack MacRae once more, she told him. But she knew the amulet would protect him, so instead she cast a spell on MacRae's alarm clock to prevent it from ringing.

Again, MacRae could hardly believe his ears. He had told no one about the alarm—not even Rohan. The woman also told him that without the amulet's protection, an invisible spirit had attacked him and pushed him down the dockside steps. As she left, she had one last warning for him: "Beware of snakes."

There were complications to MacRae's spinal injury and he decided to return to Britain, where he was treated at St. Thomas's hospital in London and, after six months, discharged, completely cured.

He was offered a good position with a London theatrical producer, but found he could not settle down, so three years later, he decided to defy the curse and return to the Bahamas.

Two weeks after he arrived he was found dead in bed. Although his death was attributed to natural causes, the corner's report mentioned marks on his forearm which appeared to be a snake bite. . . .

GHOST'S PHOTOGRAPH STARTED A MURDER HUNT

By the time James Thomas's funeral was over, his wife, Julia, must have thought she had accomplished the impossible—a perfect murder. It had all gone so well, for James had suffered for years from a mild heart complaint and when she described to the doctor how he had woken in the night complaining of severe pains in his chest, it had all seemed so believable.

Indeed, she might well have escaped justice, if it hadn't been for something that is beyond compare in the world of psychical phenomena.

Julia, who was 40, had married James who was twenty years her senior, quite simply for his money almost 20 years earlier and she soon regretted her impulsiveness. For although James was a popular man somehow his age and his rather fussy manner soon began to annoy his wife.

She constantly wished that she had married someone nearer her own age; someone who did not care if a picture was not placed in the center of a wall, or if the calendar was not kept up to date every day. James's mottos: "A place for everything and everything in its place" and "All loose ends must be tied" threatened to drive her to distraction. And eventually she found herself hating him so much that she began to think about murder. . . .

She planned it well, cautiously administering the poison over a long period of time. Unfortunately for James, he hated going to the doctor and when his stomach pains started, Julia was only too ready to agree that medical treatment wasn't really necessary.

"It's only indigestion, darling," she would say. "You eat your meals too quickly. I'll get you something to take for it." And she did. She administered a fraction more poison with the patent medicine he was so addicted to.

His chest pains she treated very differently. She told him how worried she was about his "heart condition" and encouraged him to consult his doctor as often as possible. If there were no pains then Julia would invent them and seek the doctor's advice on how to cope with James's illness. Consequently, nobody was really surprised when they heard James had died from a fatal heart attack.

They had no children, so the only close relative to attend the funeral was James's twin brother Alec, who had flown over from Canada. On Julia's side, ten relatives paid their respects at the graveside, then accompanied her home again.

Had Alec not been present, it is unlikely that any photographs would have been taken. But as he was only in Britain for a short time, he wanted a record to take back with him of all the people he knew who had known and liked James. Especially, he wanted a photograph which included the bravely grieving widow, Julia, whom everybody admired and respected so much.

A local photographer, John Fitton, took the pictures on the lawn. It was a hot afternoon, and Julia said that James would like to think of them taking advantage of the garden that he had loved so much.

Thirteen people in all were in the group and, at

Julia's request, she took up a position on the outside. She explained that it did not seem right that she should be considered the most important person there. After all, she emphasized, it was James they were honoring, not his widow.

The photographs were ready the following morning and Fitton delivered them to Julia's home. Julia herself opened the door, went to fetch Alec, who was staying with her and together they joined the photographer in the living room.

Alec noticed immediately how ill at ease Fitton appeared, and feared that perhaps the photographs had not turned out as well as might be expected. He was, therefore, surprised that in reply to his question on this point, the photographer replied that the pictures were very good.

Then, for a few moments, Fitton looked down at the brown envelope containing the photographs, and suddenly he thrust the packet at Alec and said, "You'd better look for yourself."

Carefully, Alec withdrew the pictures, but no sooner had he looked at them than his expression changed to astonishment—and horror. "What is it, Alec? You look ill," asked Julia.

Alec handed her one of the photographs. "My God!" she exclaimed, "It's . . . it's James!"

Fitton insisted that, until he had developed and printed the film, he had no idea that there had been someone present who should *not* have been.

"Particularly somebody we had buried only an hour before," said Alec.

There was no doubt about it; James Thomas, the dead man, had been photographed with those who had attended his own funeral—and he was standing immediately next to his wife Julia.

In a report which he gave to a psychical research

institute, Alec Thomas explained that while looking at the photograph, he suddenly knew that his brother's ghost had appeared for some specific purpose. Alec had never believed in ghosts and he knew, for that matter, neither had James. So to see him appearing in this incredible way was indicative of only one thing—James was trying to illustrate that for some reason or other he did not want to leave the Earthly plane. There must have been some loose end that had not been tied up, something that offended his sense of order. James had always been a stickler for detail.

Alec Thomas was a sensible man; the senior executive position he had achieved in a large oil company proved that he was a man of intelligence and ability. And, once confronted with something he could not understand, he became determined to unravel the mystery and the reasons behind it.

The photographer was paid for the job and Alec requested that he should divulge nothing concerning the strange contents of the pictures to anybody.

Julia immediately begged him to destroy the photographs. They frightened her, she said. She could see no point in keeping them.

For some reason that he did not then fully understand, Alec refused. He then told Julia that he would postpone his return to Canada until he had investigated the meaning behind this incredible phenomenon. And nothing Julia could say would change his mind.

As a first step, Alec consulted Dr. Hugo Bleithanser, a friend of his, who was an ardent psychical investigator and, on hearing the evidence—particularly about the dead man's character—Bleithanser agreed that the most probable reason for James's return was that some matter had been left unsettled before his death; or

that something had happened that offended his "sense of order."

Bleithanser also put forward the theory that James Thomas would continue to return to the Early plane if he could, until the matter had been cleared to his satisfaction. Alternatively, his spirit would endeavor to get in touch with a psychic medium who would then try to communicate with some relative still in this world.

Bleithanser's advice to Alec was that he should find a medium without delay and try to establish contact with his brother's spirit. When Alec told Julia this, he was shocked to see her almost reach a state of complete nervous collapse. She finally told him that her shock was due to the worry she felt over the photograph.

The next day, Alec visited a local medium, and it was arranged to hold a series of seances to try to contact his dead brother. Julia refused to accompany him but she would not explain why. And Alec, seeing how overwrought she was becoming, didn't pursue the matter any further.

The first three seances yielded nothing, but in the fourth contact with James was achieved. And the message Alec received puzzled him. "Justice will be done." That was all that was said.

When Alec told Julia about this she pleaded with him to cease all further inquiries, but Alec argued that he had to carry his investigations through to the end.

No further contact was made during the next few seances and as time went on, Alec observed that Julia was evidently feeling the strain. She ate hardly anything and smoked incessantly. Each time Alec returned for a seance he always sensed her relief if he reported that no further communication had taken place.

But Alec Thomas was a patient man and eventually his tenacity was rewarded. One night the medium again established contact with James's ghost and the message was plain and very much to the point.

"Julia murdered me," proclaimed the voice. "She poisoned me." And then, faintly, as it retreated back into limbo, "Justice has *now* been done."

Horrified, Alec hurried back to Julia's house. What would she say? Would she be able to offer any defense? These questions spun around in his mind as he entered the drawing room where he knew Julia would be waiting.

Alec was to learn the answer to his questions much sooner than he had imagined, for Julia was dead. Beside the couch on which she lay was an empty pill box and a suicide note.

"I killed him and he will not let me rest," she had written. "I must be punished for justice must be served."

Alec did not remain in England to attend Julia's funeral, nor did he ever again attempt to establish contact with the spirit world.

THE HAUNTED CITY

London is a haunted city. Almost every street, every courtyard and every house, has some strange tale about the supernatural connected with it. And this

is hardly surprising when one considers that the city has been at the heart of the eternal struggle for power for something like two thousand years. Such a turbulent town is bound to have produced its share of turbulent spirits.

And it has. Yet few of these phantoms are as violent or as malignant as the one that inhabited a house near the Crystal Palace less than fifty years go. This house had been empty for almost ten years before Samuel Trent and his family took it over in 1920.

Although it was hardly a modern house, it was spacious enough for them and their rather large family. The lease was long—and cheap. And for the first few weeks after they moved in, there was nothing whatsoever to hint at the evil presence that was waiting to strike such terror into their hearts.

The first warning came late one September night, when Trent was playing chess with a neighbor in the living room. His wife had retired early to bed, and the men were contemplating the chess board when they heard her screaming! Trent had never heard a sound like that before—and he never wanted to again. Both men were unable to move for a second—then they sprang up the stairs towards the bedroom.

Trent hurled the door open and switched on the light—to see his wife struggling for her life against an invisible being that was trying to smother her with a pillow! There was no question of Susan Trent doing so herself, for both men clearly saw her arms beating helplessly at the air. And yet the pillow was being crushed cruelly down on her face.

It took the joint efforts of both men—struggling against some superhuman force—to free her.

Fortunately, whatever it was stopped before poor Mrs. Trent was completely suffocated, but it was the beginning of the end for the family as far as the house

was concerned. After this horrific manifestation, the bed was seen to move—when no one was within feet of it.

Footsteps echoing along passageways at night when Mr. Trent was alone did little to help the family's peace of mind. And within weeks, the house was empty again.

But not for long; a retired actress moved in with a pack of pet dogs. Dogs have a much more highly developed sense of the "unseen" than humans have and, from the first, they were nervous and unhappy. The actress, however, put this down to strange surroundings.

At least, she put it down to that until the night when she heard a yelp from upstairs and dashed to the rescue—only to find one of her favorites lying dead on the bedroom floor.

As she bent over the stricken animal, her attention was suddenly caught by the bed . . . one of the pillows was standing on end, twitching slightly and very definitely "inhabited." With an enormous sense of outrage, combined with her devotion to her dogs, she rushed at the apparition and flung it to the floor.

For a time, it seemed she had won. But it was only the first round in the battle, for the spirit soon returned to the attack. Matches were handed to her in the darkness, deep sighs were heard at her elbow and, in the presence of several witnesses, heavy pictures moved. The restless soul of the house was working terrifyingly to achieve its end. And it succeeded. The house was vacated once more.

It stayed like that for a long time. Prospective tenants were frightened off by mysterious lights appearing in empty rooms. But, eventually, another family moved in and now the ghost wasted no time, because on their very first night the hauntings began in earnest.

The daughter of the family woke in the middle of the night to see a very tall figure dressed in black standing in the room. It bent over her and she felt the bed shaken violently for several seconds. Then the figure disappeared.

Understandably enough, the girl screamed for her father, who made a thorough search of the house, but nothing was found—not even an unbolted door. A week later the whole household was disturbed by a loud hammering in the basement.

The lady of the family, with a kind of foolish courage, went down to investigate and found the shadowy form of a huge coffin in the center of the basement floor.

She fainted.

But as the others rushed to her assistance they met, and were passed by, a black smoke form, which filled them with so much fear that, in seven days, the premises again stood deserted. They were the last tenants —but there is still one more, totally inexplicable event to come.

The landlord visited his unprofitable property one day, and noticed a smell of gas. He sent for a workman and then sat in the living room to wait for him.

After a while he heard noises in the cellar and, on going down to investigate, he discovered a man at work on the gas pipes—much to his surprise, because he had locked the front door.

The figure ignored his questions and he was beginning to get irritated when he heard a knock on the front door . . . and found the workman he had summoned standing on the doorstep. Surprised, they went downstairs together, but could find no trace of the first workman. The house was never leased out again.

The landlord believed, until the day he died, that

the original owner—known to have commited suicide —had inhabited the place over the years—and had even attempted to keep it in good running order!

Less unsociable, but equally persistent, were the specters that walked Holland House which, in 1954, was the last great private palace in London—home of successive Lord Hollands—and it was being pulled down. Enemy aircraft had dealt its death blow and, despite innumerable pleadings to restore the building, it was eventually destroyed.

The original boundaries of Holland Park were much greater than the area which now bears that name. And in the gardens of the old Holland House, a 17th century building, at least three ghosts walked.

An early Lord Holland (the name derives from a connection with Holland in Lincolnshire, not the Netherlands) was frequently seen in the most famous of all attitudes for a period ghost. In the best traditional manner, he walked with his head under his arm! No one has ever been able to establish whether his revisits to his old home were for the purposes of revenge, justice, or just plain spite.

Another pair, often seen, actually began *their* hauntings before they died. Lady Diana Rich, an eighteenth century beauty, was having a walk before lunch with some companions, when they came face to face with her own image! It was no case of mistaken identity, because they recognized her jewels and accessories. At that time, she was a very healthy young woman. Yet a month later she died from smallpox. On its own this could be taken as coincidence. But exactly the same thing happened to her sister, Lady Elizabeth Thynne. And for several centuries, the ghost of one or other of these ladies had been seen, walking in the gardens, retreading the paths among the roses

where they received their warnings of approaching death.

Although his form was never seen, another man who left his spirit indelibly etched into Holland House was the writer, wit and statesman, Joseph Addison, who lived and died there and, until the arrival of Hitler's bombs, his desk and chair remained. He was a remarkable man, and later owners of Holland House have sworn they could feel his "presence" with them.

But now that the house no longer exists, neither do its ghosts. At least, no one has seen them since the Greater London Council put an end to the building. Perhaps they've been laid to rest in a final peace. Or perhaps the mounds of concrete and steel which now surround Holland Park are simply not to their taste —and they have gone elsewhere.

In London, certainly, they should have little difficulty in finding accommodation suitable to their state, and even the congenial company of others like themselves.

For London has a multitude of ghosts. . . .

HAUNTED BY THE PHANTOM IN A SECOND-HAND CHAIR

Can an inanimate object be haunted in exactly the same way as a house or a room? Psychical investigators have long believed in such a possibility . . .

and one example that would appear to bear this out involved Harold Crowther and an old chair.

It was a very nice chair, a very comfortable one—but Harold was soon to wish he had never bought it, because it plunged him into the most terrifying and tragic experience ever.

When he retired from school teaching in 1942, Harold and his wife sold their house in Birmingham and fulfilled their greatest ambition by buying a cottage in the Warwickshire countryside. Quite apart from the fact it was safer living there during the war, property was cheaper, and their new home was big enough for two.

However, that was how the trouble all started. The furniture which they had amassed over the years in their former house was too large and too modern for their period cottage. So they sold it off and began buying good quality antique pieces, one of which was the old farmhouse chair that Harold discovered in the corner of a village shop in Middleton.

From the minute he saw it, Harold knew that it was exactly what he was looking for as his own fireside chair. Made completely of seasoned mahogany and worn with age and use, it resembled a large and very ornate "carver"—the sort of chair traditionally used by farmers for centuries.

"Isn't it a beauty?" he said, beaming up at his wife. "It's got a personality of its own." And he bought it.

Back at the cottage, Harold placed the chair by the side of the fire. Although it had obviously been made originally for a large farmhouse parlor, the chair fitted quite well in the small cottage and Harold felt that he had made a really good buy.

Neither Amy nor he had ever in the past shown any interest in spiritualism or the occult. Indeed, they were a couple who prided themselves on being par-

ticularly down to Earth. They were certainly the last people in the world that one would have associated with the seeing of ghosts or specters. Yet on the first evening after buying that chair, all their prejudices were rudely shattered.

Late that evening, as Harold was sitting in the chair reading, he suddenly became strangely nervous. He could not explain this, but he felt that he had just had to leave that chair! He realized that the feeling was an irrational one and he resisted it for as long as he could. Finally, when he rushed to the kitchen for a glass of water, his hands trembling violently as he drank it.

Suddenly he heard his wife give a terrified scream. Harold rushed back to the sitting room and saw the reason for her fear . . . sitting in the chair he had just vacated was a strange looking man. The stranger was about sixty years old and very fat; his face and lips were a deep hue of purple; his hands, which were rough and callused, were covered with warts and his clothes were very old-fashioned. And he appeared to be completely oblivious of their presence, for he was sitting perfectly relaxed as if by his own fireside.

This man was visible for no more than twenty seconds, but that was long enough for them to take in every detail of his aspect and to recognize the fact that, for the first time in their lives, they had seen a ghost!

Although it had not occurred to either of the Crowthers that the chair itself was haunted, rather than the cottage, Harold decided the next evening that he would sit in another chair. For he remembered only too clearly how nervous he had felt just prior to the ghost's appearance.

However, although he did not believe that they had anything to fear, Amy had stated quite bluntly that

if the ghost ever showed itself again, she would insist that they leave the cottage and find somewhere else to live.

That evening, Harold was just about to switch on the radio to listen to the nine o'clock news broadcast, when the ghost materialized again, looking exactly as he had on the previous occasion. But this time he stared so threateningly at the Crowthers that his eyes were almost popping out of his bloated head.

Suddenly, the specter raised its right hand and thrust it out at them in a menacing fashion. Before they had time to move, however, the strange and hideous phantom had vanished.

Harold and Amy immediately left the cottage to spend the night in the village inn. The next day they went to stay with relatives while the cottage was put up for sale and their furniture put into storage.

Within three months the cottage had been sold and the Crowthers bought a modern house. The farmhouse chair was painted white and placed out in the garden under an apple tree.

Harold was sitting there one day while Amy was out shopping, when he had that overwhelming feeling of nervousness again. It was exactly the same feeling that he had experienced at the cottage. But when he tried to rise from the chair a great weight held him down and he felt a pressure on his neck. He struck out with his fists and, by using all his strength, eventually freed himself and leaped from the chair.

Then he saw the ghost again, sitting in the chair and waving its arms violently in Harold's direction as if trying to hit him, the fat face looking more bloated and mottled than ever.

At that moment, Amy Crowther arrived in the garden with a friend, Mrs. Rita Harris, and they *both* saw the ghost sitting in the chair. In fact, the ghost turned

towards them, its mouth moving as if it was shouting, but no sound emerged from the blue and swollen lips. Then it vanished.

By that time Harold had decided to seek expert advice, and he consulted a medium who advised him to burn the chair. It was the chair, she said, that had imprisoned the spirit of a dead man.

So Harold built a bonfire in his garden and destroyed the old chair, pouring half of a gallon of gasoline over it, and within minutes the chair had been reduced to ashes. Harold was then convinced that they had laid the ghost forever.

Although shaken by their experience of the supernatural, both Amy and Harold quickly forgot the horror they had witnessed and labeled the story, "The day we killed a ghost," which always elicited a good laugh from their friends.

But ghosts may be harder to "kill" than the Crowthers imagined. For a month later their house was burned to the ground and both he and Amy died in the flames.

An investigation found that the fire had been caused by the igniting of gasoline which had been poured over the furniture in a downstairs room.

Nothing was ever found to show *who* had started the fire, but many relatives and friends of the dead couple and the medium they had consulted, tried to tell the police that the fire had been started as an act of revenge by a ghost.

But murder by a man who had been dead for over 100 years was impossible. As far as the law is concerned, anyway. . . .

STRANGE DEATHS IN FLYING SAUCER ALLEY

The 10,000 square miles of jungle and mountain not far from Rio de Janeiro looks no different from any other similar region in what is still a comparatively unexplored continent. Yet in recent years it has acquired a unique and uncanny reputation, for both to the Brazilians who live there and many other people throughout the world, it is known as Flying Saucer Alley.

Since 1947, the year when the largest reported number of UFO sightings were recorded, that stretch of South American territory has been the scene of the most constant Saucer sensations. Many of them were spotted by literally hundreds of people at the same time and, since then, there have been practically *daily* reports of UFO activity.

During the 1950s, a United States national magazine which sent a team of experts down to investigate the phenomenon came up with a startling new theory—a theory that was certainly not laughed at by the Brazilians; a theory that *somewhere in the dense jungle, there is a Flying Saucer base!*

Certainly this theory sounded most credible less than three years later, when a flight of several hundred UFOs were spotted swooping silently in from the Atlantic just before dawn one May morning, to disappear over the jungle.

Then in December, 1954, the inhabitants of the small Sao Paolo suburb of Campinas saw something even more weird. A UFO, apparently out of control, was hovering erratically above the streets, roaming over something like a 100 mile stretch of farmland and suburbia. During the time it was clearly visible in the twilight, its lights were flickering wildly, almost as if it had got out of control.

And then almost one thousand people saw an incredible sight. From the base of the Saucer a silverish, brightly glowing liquid started to trickle down over the countryside. Many samples were taken and sent for analysis to government research centers, but the scientists who carried out the tests were baffled. For the mineral certainly contained some compound almost identical to tin . . . yet there were other qualities present, too—substances which had no Earthly counterpart.

Did they make up some strange fuel system that could propel the UFOs from a distant civilization beyond the most distant stars? Or were they part of the Saucer's physical structure—the body—which had been melted away by an incredible temperature caused by the friction of entering the Earth's atmosphere?

So far nobody has yet discovered the answer. But one interesting find was made a few years ago, when specimens of the strange substance were sent to a metalurgical research center in Krakow, Poland. Chemists there linked the UFO's "life blood" with a compound they had extracted from another Space exhibit, from a meteorite that had crashed into the mountains in northeast Siberia in 1847.

But it was in August, 1966, that the most bizarre mystery was uncovered near the town of Niteroy, about seventy miles from Rio de Janeiro. It all started when Grace Souza, the former actress-wife of a wealthy Brazilian stockbroker, was driving home with her children

from a matinee show. Mrs. Souza suddenly noticed a large circular object drifting slowly in from the sea towards Vintem Hill.

It was moving slowly and silently—"sinister" was her description—and then it swept up into the heat haze on the hillside and practically disappeared into the side of the mountain.

The next morning two small boys played truant from school and crept stealthily into the heavily forested hillside with a squirrel gun. They were going hunting—but they found more than they bargained for. They found 34-year-old Miguel Viana and his friend Manual Cruz. They had both been killed in a way that has never been fully understood . . . and by persons whose identities have baffled the authorities completely.

Why they died is as great a riddle as anything else, and the only possible clues lay in the fact that both men were keen "Ufologists," that they were known to have attempted to establish contact with the Flying Saucers. Once, they had even disappeared into the jungle for almost six months, trying to locate the "UFO Base."

When the police discovered all this, the only conclusion they could reach was the impossible one that Cruz and Viana had succeeded with their search. And they had been killed—in the human sense of the word, at least—as an effective way of silencing them.

Does such a theory sound too fantastic? In any other circumstances it certainly would—but not in this case, not when one examines the incidents which led up to the killing, and looks at them in relationship to the two murder victims. As you will see, the more fantastic the facts become, the more plausible they are.

When the people arrived at the scene, it was another sultry August day, yet both the corpses were clad in mint-new overcoats and there was no sign of any vio-

lence. Their clothing was arranged as carefully as it would have been if the men took great pains to make themselves comfortable on the ground. What was so startling was the fact that, at first glance, one thought the corpses had been decapitated!

They weren't. Their heads were completely covered with large, heavy, eyeless leaden masks; the only socket in the masks was a triangular notch in the center just above the dead men's noses.

However, these weird masks certainly didn't cause the deaths, for there was several inches of space between the masks and the heads and ample air could be obtained through the notches. On the ground beside the corpses were two scraps of paper, several plastic bags and scraps of colored paper which were covered by strange hieroglyphics, which were obviously part of a cipher or code. And one was a formula which none of the police experts has so far been able to decipher.

The first piece of notepaper was a time table relating to a series of capsules which were to be taken by the men at certain varying times during the previous few days. Significantly, the last pill was to be taken on the day they died . . . when they were "lying down as *directed.*"

Then, after doing so at a specified time, the men were told—in their own handwriting—to cover their faces with "*the* masks provided." Provided by *whom* . . . ? For what purpose . . . ? And what were the pills . . . ?

As detectives, led by Inspector José Bittencourt of the Homicide Division, probed deeper into the murders and the motives behind them, they became even more astonished—and alarmed—by what they were gradually uncovering. There were no footprints in the soft, moist earth at the scene of the crime, other than

those of the dead men and the two boys who had discovered them.

Neither could police tracker dogs pick out any signs that anybody else, apart from the boys, had visited the scene of the crime and then departed again.

Then the investigation uncovered the fact that both Cruz and Viana were so fanatical about their Ufology research that their families had been driven almost to distraction by their dedication—and by the mysterious experiments they conducted behind locked doors—and worried by the expensive and bizarre electronic devices they spent so much time working on.

On the day they died, Bittencourt found that both men had gone off on a very unusual shopping spree. At the height of the hottest summer for several years, both Cruz and Viana had scoured the shopping centers of Rio de Janeiro trying to buy two overcoats! There was no doubt about that, for few people in Brazil own overcoats even in winter; trying to buy one in August was like looking for an ice-cream parlor in Greenland!

The shopkeeper who sold them two, Jaime Alves, was frankly mystified by the sale and explained to the police afterwards: "People don't just buy them at this time of the year."

The two men then made their way to a roadhouse on the highway at the foot of Vintem Hill, where they bought a bottle of mineral water. The barmaid there, Maria Silva, was the last person to see Cruz and Viana alive, and she, too, was puzzled by the overcoats. She watched the two men make their way up the hillside, burdened by parcels, sweltering in their coats . . . going to meet death.

How they died was a mystery, too. For bearing in mind the instructions about the tablets they appeared to have taken, the autopsies showed no toxic presence in the bodies. "All organs had been functioning prop-

erly and normally," reported the team of surgeons and physicians that carried out the most unusual autopsy in medical history. "We have been unable to discern the cause of death, for there are neither wounds, burns or traces of poison present. Both victims were remarkably healthy, fit and strong young men . . . there was no reason for their deaths.

"Neither was there any reason why their hearts should have stopped beating. . . ."

The report almost drove Bittencourt crazy with frustration. So, clutching what was practically his final straw, he sent the lead masks to be examined by a military-scientific laboratory. Their analysis was even more negative: "There is no evidence of radioactive material here and no scientific explanation for these items. We are puzzled, for we can find no practical application for these masks, except that they were obviously designed to protect the wearers' eyes against something . . . but protection against *what?*"

Then came what appeared to be a break for the police. Bittencourt learned that Viana and Cruz had scraped up over $2,500.00 on the day they were killed, and they had taken it with them when they left their homes. However, there was only about $25.00 on the bodies—so where had the rest gone? Had they spent it in one afternoon, and if so, on what?

The only purchases the dead men had made were those Bittencourt already knew about—the bottle of mineral water and the overcoats, and certainly they had not cost $2,500.00. Maria Silva remembered they had carried parcels, but all that was lying near the bodies were empty plastic bags and scraps of paper. Maria remembered several bulky parcels—the masks would only have required two.

What else had they been carrying when they climbed

that hillside? And, more important, what had been inside the parcels—and what had happened to them?

Normally, after so many months of investigation that led nowhere, the case would probably have been placed in the pending files while the detectives turned to more immediate problems, but this one so intrigued Bittencourt that he has received special permission to devote all the time he needs—forever, if necessary—to tracking down this strange murderer . . . or simply finding a logical reason for the deaths.

His obviously best beginning has been with a thorough investigation of the two murder victims themselves, and this has proved a remarkable business. Viana, he learned, was considered by many experts to be an electronic genius! Yet he was so obsessed with Ufology that he never exploited his talents as much to his personal advantage as he could have done. He preferred his weird experiments, in partnership with Cruz, experiments he never discussed with anyone apart from his colleague, but experiments which could hardly fail to affect the lives of his relatives.

Viana's family in particular recalled two alarming incidents and José Viana, Miguel's father, told Bittencourt about them.

"Early one morning I was awakened by a terrific explosion from Miguel's laboratory. It was just after five thirty in the morning and they must have been in there for almost 24 hours.

"I sprang from my bed and met them staggering out, surrounded by clouds of black, foul-smelling smoke. But they wouldn't let me inside, and assured me that there was no fire. My son only explained that they had been tracking some strange radio signals from beyond this world and, when they had almost pinpointed them, his transmitter and receiver, which must have cost him several thousand dollars, exploded.

"Some months later, they picked up the signals again. Then they hurried from the house early one morning with something wrapped in a sack; apparently they were going to carry out another experiment near Vintem Hill.

"When they hadn't come back by dark, I drove out in my car to try to find them. I was worried, you see, but there was no sign of them. I called and shouted for hours.

"Suddenly, there was another explosion about half a mile away. And a curious glow lit up the sky for miles. It lasted for about ten minutes, more than enough time for me to drive towards it, and I found Miguel and Manuel staggering along the road towards me. They were both frightened, but strangely excited. Yet they never told me what had happened."

After thinking about his son's death for some months, José Viana contacted Bittencourt with a theory about it. He recalled the other explosions near Vintem Hill, and the evening the UFO had been seen staggering about the sky out of control—when the "tin" had leaked out of it. And on almost every occasion, his son and Cruz had been conducting their experiments on the edge of town!

Was there any connection? Viana, senior, is convinced there is. He believes that Manuel had found some means of interfering with UFOs in flight and had been trying to bring one down to Earth.

Later Bittencourt found that these masks had been made in Manuel's workship because the fragments from the notches were discovered on the floor. Why had they been made—to protect the young men's eyes from the fierce blast when they pulled a Flying Saucer from the sky?

Bittencourt is still working on the case, but after three years all he has to show for his work is a mass of in-

credible clues that have no common denominator. He also has another mystery to solve.

One of the most valuable and puzzling discoveries was the piece of paper on which Viana had written down the strange formula—the formula that was only vaguely understood as being an electronic one by experts.

Viana's genius was such that it had been placed in a strongroom in the police headquarters in Rio de Janeiro until it could be examined by other top flight experts. The strongroom was only opened on official permission from a very high level and there were always several policemen and detectives present on every occasion.

It needed three keys and a code to open the door, all of which were the responsibilities of several people. Yet, somehow, that scrap of paper with its ingenious hieroglyphics has disappeared!

If one assumes that no policeman would have taken it, then how could it have been stolen? Could it have been destroyed by some superhuman power possessed by the creatures in the Flying Saucers?

Was there a link between that formula and the double murder? Were the two men killed because the formula was some secret process which the extra-terrestrial beings in the Saucers realized was a menace to their safety? Yes, it sounds fantastic—but then the entire story does, too. It is almost from the realms of science-fiction.

However, there is no shred of doubt that it did happen on that August evening in 1966 . . . the very evening that Mrs. Souza saw the UFO landing on Vintem Hill. Her report only reached Bittencourt some time afterwards and when he checked it out with her in detail, he found that her sightings had happened at exactly the moment the pathologists claim that Cruz and Viana were killed.

The lack of tracks on the ground suggested an impossible murder all right, but there is another possible suggestion here, and that is that the men were *not* killed where their corpses were found—that they were killed elsewhere, and then their bodies were deposited there from the air. In other words, that they were lured aboard the UFO and then killed. . . .

That theory would certainly explain the lack of tracks near the bodies, as well as the presence of the Flying Saucer Mrs. Souza saw drifting down on to Vintem Hill.

However, this is by no means the end of this bizzare report, for a few days before the news of the murder swept the world something even more unbelievable happened.

At a seance in Hamburg, a German medium was communicating with the "spirit world" in her own language and the whole seance was being tape-recorded by a psychic investigator. There were more than a dozen people present, several of whom, including the investigator, were skeptics.

Suddenly, the medium Hannah Weisz's voice died away for several moments. When she spoke again it was in a heavily accented American voice—in English.

And the voice said, "Tell my people that I am not dead, that Manuel and I still live. But we have made contact . . . they are with us now. They have—they have allowed us to tell you this. And Manuel sends his love to Nelli . . . and I to Jo-jo."

Almost a year passed before anybody realized there was any possible connection with the murder of Cruz and Viana and this recording. And when it was realized, it gave the most incredible proof and posed the most remarkable theory. For Nelli is the name of Manuel Cruz's wife, who is still alive—and Jo-jo was Miguel's pet name for his father, José Viana! Miguel had

been educated at an American sponsored school in Rio and had used the Anglicized pronunciation of José when addressed his father, which he often shortened to Jo-jo!

Can they still be alive? Perhaps they are, perhaps their human corpses were shed as a snake sheds its old skin for a new one, as the chrysalis of a caterpiller becomes a butterfly. Perhaps they shed their unwanted human husks and were transported into another dimension, in another world, where Miguel Viana's brilliant mind can develop and work without the encumbrances of human flesh and human weaknesses.

Inspector Bittencourt saw a Flying Saucer for himself recently, sweeping in over Rio de Janeiro late one evening when he was still in his office. He watched it soar silently along Flying Saucer Alley and across the mountains towards the heart of the jungle. Perhaps he wondered who was controlling it . . . if the "pilot" was the being responsible for a double murder on Vintem Hill . . . or was, in fact, one of the victims himself. . . .

THE RECLUSE OF THE BLACK FOREST

In a West German hospital, the location of which is being kept a close secret, lies one of the greatest enigmas of the 20th century. She is a frail, prematurely aged woman with an astonishing ambition.

Yet even her name is something of which no one

can be absolutely sure. To the world she is known as Anna Anderson, but the name she seeks is Grand-Duchess Anastasia Nikolaievna, youngest daughter of the late Nicholas II, last Emperor of Russia.

Successive courts have denied her claims to be the only surviving member of the family massacred by Ural Soviets in July, 1918. In 1967, a German Supreme Court at Karlruhle refused to grant Anna Anderson the right to claim the title, but even so, no legal judgment can remove the fascination of her extraordinary story.

Mrs. Anderson, as we must call her, has been referred to both as a lunatic and an impostor, but we can be sure of nothing. We cannot even take the easy way out and condemn her as a fortune hunter, because she knows she cannot be sure there is any fortune to be gained if her long quest is ever successful. Although it has often been alleged that a vast Czarist fortune lies in the vaults of the Bank of England, this has never been confirmed by the bank authorities.

The Czar's personal fortune, however, is believed to be in the care of a leading merchant bank in the City of London, and some estimates put it as high as 60 million dollars. Other sources, though, claim it amounts only to a few thousand dollars, which is certainly not worth a battle of forty years.

No one knows; no one is saying. Certainly, descendants of the Romanova family have dismissed the existence of any fortune as complete nonsense.

And what of Anna Anderson, who claims to have been born Anastasia Nikolaievna, at Peterhof Castle, St. Petersburg on June 5, 1901? She withdrew from the world, shut herself away in the depths of the Black Forest. Now her story could end in that West German hospital or in the tiny village of Unterlengenhardt, in a secluded chalet to which she hopes to retire—unless there is startling new evidence to support her claim,

or unless she confesses to a gigantic fraud, we shall never know the truth.

We *do* know what happened on that terrible July day in 1918, to Czar Nicholas II, his wife, the former Princess Alix of Hesse, to the children Olga, Tatiana, Maria and the boy Alexi. Only the fate of Anastasia is in doubt, as it always has been.

Czar Nicholas, a weak, vacillating man completely incapable of understanding and anticipating the vast revolutionary forces at work in Russia, was arrested with his wife in the Palace of Tsarskoe in St. Petersburg. The children were rounded up, together with any servants who chose to remain loyal to the Czar.

The party was removed to Ekaterinburg in Siberia where they huddled into the cellar of a farm house. The Czar, carrying the delicate Alexi in his arms, was forced into a chair, the rest of the prisoners squatted on cushions.

The appointed executioner, Yurovski stepped forward and delivered a terse death-sentence: "Nikolai Alexandrovich, you are to be shot."

The Czar, in blank incomprehension, tried to rise. Yurovski's pistol shot killed the Czar instantly. The rest of the guard opened fire, killing the son, the Czar's wife and servants. One of the girls—according to eye witnesses, it was Anastasia—rolled on the ground screaming and trying to defend herself against a rein of blows from rifle butts and sabers. The rest of the party was then massacred.

The bodies were collected and flung into a lorry which drove at top speed to a disused mine, where they were thrown down the shaft.

But how many bodies? The scene was so confused and the murderers so intent on speed, that no one kept a check on the number of bloodstained bundles. The following day, the corpses of the Romanovs were burnt

with petrol and the remains destroyed by sulphuric acid.

Rumors soon began to circulate, however, that one body was missing. No one knows who first mentioned it; some Soviet historians have said it was the work of White Russians trying to sabotage the revolution. At any rate, the Soviets took the rumor seriously and a gigantic search operation was launched from the Baltic to the borders of Rumania, throughout Siberia and European Russia.

Red Guard witnesses came forward to state that they had seen an unidentified woman being loaded on a Siberian farm-cart, but no one could be sure it was one of the Czar's daughters. The search was eventually called off.

And Anna Anderson's own story? She states that she gained consciousness in great pain to find herself on a moving cart, lying on straw which smelt of vinegar and onions. Her head ached and her mouth was sticky with blood. Occasionally, when her screams threatened to attract attention, she was lifted off the cart and carried by two men. When she moaned in hunger, coarse black bread was forced into her mouth. Her arm was raw from a wound and when she became chilled with fever she was wrapped in sacking.

Anna Anderson claims that she was in the hands of Czarist supporters who, after many adventures, brought her to Berlin.

A White Russian underground movement did, in fact, exist, and many escapers found their way as far as London. What is strange is that no one has ever admitted carrying Anastasia from Ekaterinburg, but it is perfectly possible no one knew of her real identity even then.

Mrs. Anderson has never been able to identify any

of her rescuers, save that one was a peasant woman called Maria.

Was the bedraggled figure scarred by bayonet wounds, who was fished out of a Berlin Canal in 1920, really Anastasia, as she has claimed ever since? For Mrs. Anderson had attempted suicide, but was rescued. Berlin Police refused to accept any suggestion that she was Anastasia, and the skeptical Detective-Inspector Grunberg, in charge of the case, was sure that the woman who jumped into the Landwehr-Kanal and who was taken to Berlin's Elizabeth Hospital was a certain Franziska Shanzkowski, a Pole on the register of emigrees.

An alert German journalist, Doris Wingender confirmed this, for she recognized the self-styled Anastasia from photographs of Shanzkowski.

Then a fellow Pole, in exile in England, came forward to swear that Franziska had, in July, 1920, arrived in Hull. Her photograph and general description—that of a chubby faced, dark-haired girl of 20 with slightly arrogant bearing—bore a strong resemblance both to Anna Anderson *and* to Anastasia.

Then who was the woman in the hands of the Berlin police? She was incarcerated in a psychiatric ward for two years. Then a whisper went around White Russian circles that "Fraulein Unbekannt" (Miss Unknown) was Anastasia.

Eventually, this mystery woman told an extraordinary story. One of the Red Guards at Ekaterinburg had been an ardent revolutionary named Alexander Tchaikovski and, although dedicated to his country's bid for freedom, he had been disgusted at the way in which the Royal Family had been massacred.

Tchaikovski had been present in the cellar. After the shootings, he spotted that Anastasia was not dead, but was severely wounded. Waiting until he was unlikely to be spotted, Tchaikovski, helped by his brother, pulled

her away from the other bodies. With his mother and sister, Tchaikovski made good their escape out of Russia.

This was before the alleged discovery of the missing body—not as difficult as it sounded for the whole country was in turmoil and the passage of one cart need not necessarily have caused comment.

Tchaikovski broke the news to Anastasia that all her family were dead, and it was this, he claims, that led to her illness and a nervous fever that turned to near insanity by the time the party reached safety.

In December, 1918, the cart crossed the Rumanian frontier safely. Anastasia was put in the care of other relatives of the Tchaikovskis. By then, however, she was mentally unbalanced. She had left Russia a rich woman with some of her priceless jewels still sewn in her clothing, but these had been removed to pay for the journey and to bribe anyone who might have betrayed the party. Soon, she was penniless.

Worse to follow. One morning, Alexander Tchaikovski went shopping for food in Bucharest, and was murdered by a mysterious assailant in the street. Whether or not this man was a Bolshevik intent on revenge for Tchaikovski's defection was never discovered. By then, however, Anna had married him and was expecting a child.

Later, she stated that the wedding took place in a Catholic Church near where the runaways were hiding, but no record of any such marriage had been found in Rumania.

As for the child, which had its father's dark hair and mother's blue eyes, its fate is not recorded. Anna Anderson stated that the father took it away from her in Rumania, probably to place it in an orphanage. In 1925, there was news of an unidentified child in an orphanage at Galatz, but it was simply a rumor and no child of the mother's description was ever found.

Anastasia felt that, after her husband's death, there was no point in remaining in Rumania and she prepared to leave. This in itself is puzzling, for Queen Maria, wife of King Ferdinand of Rumania, and daughter of Duke Alfred of Saxe-Coburg-Gohha, was living in Bucharest when Anna Anderson claims she was there. Maria was a close relative of the Romanovs . . . so why didn't Anastasia go to her? She claimed since, that she was too shy—and too ill.

When she felt well enough to travel, Anastasia asked her brother-in-law, Serge, to take her to Berlin where she could contact relatives. Money was raised and a long journey in dirty, unheated, slow-moving trains began.

During it Anastasia became ill again, her head aching from the blows of the rifle-butts, and she scarcely remembered arriving in Berlin, let alone the progress itself. She did have dim memories of Serge struggling with a few words of German, trying to book a hotel.

Her clearest recollection was being in a dingy hotel room—alone. Her benefactor, it seemed, had abandoned her. In a confusion of terror and bewilderment, she ran into the streets. Eventually, she found herself by a canal and was drawn to it irresistibly. Then blackness. . . .

In the face of such a story, the surviving members of Russia royalty were non-plussed. To an outsider it sounded a truly incredible story, as crude as a penny-dreadful. But escapes had been made from the Soviet terror in a thousand different ways. This woman's story was improbable, but by no means impossible, so it was decided to put her to the test.

It was arranged for Princess Irene of Prussia, Anastasia's aunt, to visit the girl. The encounter was disastrous. Anna Anderson was ill at the time, and she was also in a semi-hysterical condition. What the Princess

saw was a raving scarecrow who flounced out of the room at the approach of the visitor.

Princess Irene announced coldly: "This creature is an impostor. I had no sense of recognition. She certainly isn't my niece."

Those who sympathized with Anna Anderson and suspected that her claim was true, at first put down her agitation to mental unbalance. But Princess Irene was a senior member of the royal emigree circle and a particularly dominating personality. Anastasia, by unspoken agreement, was disowned.

But, despite the edict of that formidable Prussian matriarch, it was decided to test "Frau Unbekannt" yet again. This time, her uncle, the Grand Duke Andrew, took a look at the claimant—and recognized her immediately as Anastasia!

When it was pointed out to the Duke that Princess Irene had denounced the girl, he somewhat weakened Irene's authority by pointing out that the Princess had not seen Anastasia since she was ten years old!

Was Princess Irene being unjust in condemning Anna Anderson? The woman was clearly prejudiced from the start, but she said she had caught out Anna Anderson in one extremely unfortunate slip. The girl had addressed Irene as "Aunt Nini." This form of address was used by older members of the Czar's family—*but never, under any circumstances by the Grand Duchesses.* It would have been against all royal protocol.

And, was Grand Duke Andrew *too* anxious to believe that he had talked to Anastasia? After the meeting, he admitted that one curious fact bothered him. Without warning, he had addressed Anna Anderson in English, and she had stared at him in complete incomprehension. The Russian royal children had all spoken English fluently and had learned it at a very early age.

The whole matter might have been settled if Anas-

tasia's grandmother could have been persuaded to give her opinion. The Czarina Maria Feodorovna was the widow of Alexander III whom Nicholas II succeeded in 1894.

Imperious and arrogant, the old lady refused to have any contact with the claimant whatever, for she was convinced that *all* the Czar's family had survived and were hiding together! She argued that to accept the sole survival of Anastasia was to abandon hope for all the others.

Prince Sigismund of Prussia had, in 1912, met his cousin Anastasia in Russian Poland. The would-be suicide in Berlin was able to describe exactly the circumstances in which they had met and the wood in which both had picked mushrooms.

The Prince swore that no one else knew of this incident. This, he proclaimed, was *surely* Anastasia of Russia!

The ex-royalty found themselves split over the Anastasia affair. Then came an exciting development. A certain Miss Gertrude Shanzkowski *also* recognized "Anastasia"—as her younger sister Franziska. Yet Gertrude's brothers and sisters disagreed and said the strange woman was *not* Franziska!

The claimant who was to become the recluse of the Black Forest has, over the years, become an international celebrity. She has traveled the world seeking evidence to substantiate her claim. Tragedy was never very far away. In New York, Anna Anderson again fell ill and had to undergo further mental treatment.

For a time she called herself Mrs. Tchaikovski, then adopted "Anna Anderson," a name had no particular significance, in the hope that it would lessen the publicity she was attracting. If anything, it intensified it.

All the time one question persisted. Was Anna Anderson not the Grand Duchess Anastasia at all, but,

as the police had always insisted, Franziska Shanzkovski?

Investigations were undertaken in England. Home Office records were studied. It was found that Franziska, a Roman Catholic, had taken a job as a housemaid off the Strand in London.

But the searchers then drew a blank. There were *no* records of her actually having taken the job, certainly not under her own name. Is she still alive? Does she still live in Britain? No one knows.

It would seem likely that Franziska did come to London. In that case, who is Anna Anderson? The pro-Anastasia camp is a formidable one.

Journalist Gleb Botkin, son of the Czarist doctor who died with the Czar, had no doubts, even though he had not, at the time of his meeting with Mrs. Anderson, seen the Grand Duchess for nine years.

Botkin commented: "Voice, intonation, movement, bearing were all exactly right. My first impression confirmed for me without doubt that here was the Anastasia I had known."

Gleb Botkin was prepared to swear on oath that a mole on Anna Anderson's neck was identical to one possessed by Anastasia. A former dentist at the court of the Czar at first announced that he would prove through records that Mrs. Anderson's teeth matched Anastasia's, but suddenly—and oddly—when it came to the point he refused to swear to it.

It was suggested in certain quarters that he had been bribed to remain silent by others who had a claim to the Czar's fortune.

A few years later, Anna Anderson mentioned a window in the Czar's summer palace where Anastasia and her sister scratched their initials.

The girls had never revealed this to anyone for fear of being punished. In the early 1950s the Russians con-

firmed the existence of the marks, but said the initials were not those of the royal children. . . .

Is Anna Anderson really Anastasia—a woman dogged by the terrible ill-luck of never being able to prove her identity? After the last court judgment had gone against her, she stated she had no further heart to continue the struggle.

Anyone who wants to see Anna in her remote hideout has first to make his way through the deserted, weed-choked grounds of the chalet. The whole property is surrounded with high palisades and barbed wire fences. The wind whistles through the fir and palm trees of the Black Forest. It is an apt setting for a tragedy with undertones of violence.

The visitor runs the risk of attack from the savage wolfhounds, Tiny, Polly, Baby and Naughty, who guard her. For four years, she has been desperately ill with tuberculosis and her last public utterance was given through her closest friend and secretary, Baroness Monica Miltitz.

"Tell them," Anna Anderson said, "that I have no interest in what the lawyers are doing. I have had my scars and wounds examined so many times by doctors to see if they were really inflicted by Russian sabers that I've lost count. If I were to be proved Anastasia tomorrow I would give all the money away to charity."

Until she was removed to the hospital, Anna Anderson's small staff included a white-haired housekeeper, Frau von Heydebrandt, who guarded her employer from the world as if she were indeed of royal blood.

Anna Anderson was invariably referred to as "Her Royal Highness."

In this bizarre Wagnerian retreat with its simple living room dominated by a huge gilt-framed portrait of Czar Nicholas II, Anna Anderson received her few visitors.

Invariably, she spoke to them with a handkerchief covering the scars which she claimed covered saber slashes. Her most loyal suitor, a pale ghost from the heyday of European monarchy, was her homeless and penniless refugee cousin, Prince Frederick.

The number of supporters of Anna Anderson dwindle each year. Four years ago there died one of her most staunch champions, Dr. Gertrud Madsack, who helped to finance many of the court cases and was present when members of the Shanzkowski family failed to recognize the Polish refugee Franziska. Just before Dr. Madsack's death, Dr. Kurt Vermehren, who had been her lawyer for over 20 years, was killed in a car crash.

Who champions this pathetic woman now? Anyone who takes on the job will have to master documents in three languages covering 40 years' history of the case.

If Anna Anderson returns to the Black Forest and to her memories, whatever they may be, she will doubtless, for a few more years, astound everyone with her knowledge of Czarist Russia and of Anastasia, the Czar's favorite "little one."

To English visitors, for example, she will talk of her visit, long ago, to Britain. It was at the time of the death of Edward VIII—"I was only eight then." She tells of Queen Victoria's villa at Osborne in the Isle of Wight and of little David (now the Duke of Windsor) who was a naval cadet and showed her over the place.

It is hard to think that all this is invention, or fraud. Apart from everything, one desperately wants to believe that Anna Anderson, who has suffered so much, is telling the truth.

If, however, it is an elaborate swindle, the end result could be nil for Anna Anderson. Commenting on the alleged Czarist fortunes, Duke Alexander, Anas-

tasia's uncle had insisted: "All this talk of a fortune is sheer nonsense.

"The Czar had, in his last years, not a penny to his name either in the Bank of England or in any bank outside Russia. Had his reign lasted longer, he would have been a comparatively poor man by the end of the World War."

In December, 1928, Mrs. Anderson made a sworn statement that the Czar had told his four daughters that he had deposited five million rubles each for them with the Bank of England.

The mystery remains. Is Anna Anderson telling the truth? Photographs of the Grand Duchess Anastasia Nikolaievna show a pretty, twinkling child with something of the enigmatic smile of a Mona Lisa. If one compares a picture of Frau Anna Anderson with it—as I have done—that same smile is there.

Pictures of Anastasia at six years old and of Anna Anderson at 28 show a marked resemblance.

Look at Anna Anderson in later years, and it is less easy to decide, for her gently mocking smile makes you wonder.

Anna Anderson herself says she no longer cares what happens because the world no longer believes her. The last laugh is with the picture. That smile could tell you everything—or nothing.

THE MALTESE MONSTER

Ever since man first discovered how to sail a boat the island of Malta has been at the center of world affairs. So it might be thought that there was little that remained undiscovered there. Then one day in 1959, two English schoolgirls stumbled across something which had almost passed into the realms of half-forgotten folklore.

They found that a certain cove on Malta's rocky coast is the occasional haunt of a creature that should have no more existed than the mythical unicorn. Yet the weird creature—a "devil fish"—that they were frightened by left indisputable evidence of its existence!

It started when Captain Ronald Garwood was posted to a shore base on the island by the Royal Navy. He was only too pleased at such a move, as it meant his wife and daughters could join him there.

However, his job demanded long hours and as both he and his wife were caught up in a great deal of social activity, his daughters found that, for most evenings, their only companion was the Maltese housekeeper, Anna. During the long summer holidays they preferred to be alone, anyway, for it gave them every opportunity to explore their new island home. It was at the end of one of these forays that Daphne and Margaret found the cove of ill omen.

They didn't know it to be so at the time, for it looked idyllic in the setting sun. From the cliffs above it seemed a pleasant empty bay with a reasonable beach, and it was too remote to be popular with the tourists in the day time.

Naturally enough, Daphne and Margaret began to scramble down, for at their age, fourteen and ten respectively, any new thing had to be investigated immediately. To their surprise, however, Scrug, their pet terrier refused to come with them.

Normally, he would have followed them anywhere and should, by that time, have been yapping excitedly yards ahead of them. Instead, Scrug squatted down and howled. Daphne climbed back, picked him up and carried him half way down before setting him loose.

She had hoped to encourage him, but it seemed to increase his apprehension. They decided he was not afraid of the steep slope as they had thought, but was merely anxious to get home where food waited. So, leaving the dog, they clattered down the last few yards to the shore.

The water was crystal clear and the sisters bathed by the light of the dying sun. Neither of them felt the slightest sense of alarm the whole time. In fact the only troublesome thing they were aware of was the redoubled noise put up by the nervous Scrug. They noticed he had finally ventured onto the shore line, closer to them, but seemed no whit reassured by doing so. In fact, he cowered, tail between his legs.

Eventually they could stand his noise no longer and took themselves off home, not forgetting to give Scrug an admonitory slap as he scampered up to them. But he was apparently too relieved even to sulk.

The dog's behavior was so curious that both men-

tioned it to the housekeeper and it was her reaction to this that decided them to investigate the cove further. Once she had established the whereabouts of the bay they had visited that evening, she startled both of them by losing her temper.

She accused them of disobeying their father's instructions to avoid the rockier parts of the coast and finished by making them promise never to go near that particular bay again—especially at either dawn or dusk. Both girls promised readily enough, but neither felt inclined to obey the housekeeper when their own father had given no such orders.

For some reason, Anna did not tell Commander Garwood about the cove's sinister reputation. Most likely she did not know the cause of it herself and probably she did not wish to appear a superstitious peasant woman, who was afraid of an old wive's tale. Therefore Commander Garwood said nothing about the cove and, with this dubious legality, his daughters made their plans for what to them was a lark that might have turned out to be tragedy.

Daphne Garwood remembers to this day that they managed to slip out of their house on the night of a full moon. This fact had no significance for them, save that it lit their way that much more clearly. It also meant a higher tide than normal. They had taken their chance, rather cunningly, *after* their parents had returned from a late-night dinner date. They would be sure to sleep heavily and thus hear no surreptitious noises as their daughters stole away.

Fortunately for the girls it was further to the cove than they remembered and by the time they arrived on the cliffs above it, the cold dawn breeze was stirring off the land. The sun was about to rise, a fortuitous circumstance . . . for strong light is alien to creatures from the midnight depths of deep water.

Scrug had followed them eagerly enough, but more out of habit than of any thought of protection and, to their extreme annoyance, when they reached the cliff top, he again set up a fierce growling. They pounced on him and held his muzzle, for they suddenly thought that the housekeeper's vague fears might have been caused by a rumor about smugglers and they feared Scrug might raise an alarm.

As there was no movement down below, the sisters commenced the descent. They could have used the stone steps, but it was more exciting to scramble down the sloping cliffs. And when Scrug resolutely refused to follow them they only assumed that he wouldn't risk the cliffs and left him behind, whining dismally.

Daphne was the first to reach the beach and immediately noticed a strong, fishy odor. It was so strong that she thought at first that the contents of some trawler's hold had been left in the open for too long, then realized that this could hardly be the case. When Margaret joined her they looked around.

But there was nothing on the beach to be seen. There were no smugglers and no illicitly beached boats. Nothing moved, save the sea. The cove seemed unchanged since the last time they had seen it, except for that overpowering stench.

It was so strong that fear stirred within them. It was a blind, instinctive fear, fear of the unknown, because whatever caused the powerful stench could not long have left the beach!

Neither paused in their movements and neither consulted the other. Though they had just arrived they both instinctively moved towards certain safety—the stone steps. It was quicker to climb the steps to refuge than scramble back up the sloping cliffs.

Daphne, being older, soon outdistanced her sister,

who ran to catch her up. It was Margaret who literally stumbled on the evidence of what sort of creature it was that they had just missed.

Running to catch up to her sister, Margaret missed her footing in the uncertain light, tripped and fell. As she scrambled to her feet, she saw what had tripped her. It was a shallow depression in the sand. She ran on—and tripped again. This time she paused long enough to look at the strange hole; it was identical with the other.

Once they had gained the safety of the steps. Margaret had the leisure to mention the curious "holes" she had seen.

Now that their alarm was quieted, their curiosity was roused, and the sisters waited in safety till the sun was up. They walked back down the steps with Scrug trailing disconsolately behind them. In full light the cove seemed as peaceful and innocent as the day they had first seen it. The smell had evaporated, but the evidence had not. Close to the water's edge and clustered thickly near the spot where a low rock jutted into the sea, were dozens of identical depressions. Each measured a little over two feet and each had a small mound of sand in its center.

The girls recognized the marks, for they could only have been made by the suckers of a squid. In Mediterranean countries squids are a delicacy and the girls were as familiar with them as they were with canned food. There was no doubt in their minds then, and there is not now, that shortly before, a squid—of unguessed and horrific size—had been trying to drag itself up the beach. They must just barely have missed it!

How it has remained undiscovered by icthyologists is not too difficult to understand. As far as the material evidence seen by the Garwood girls is concerned,

it was obliterated by the slow collapse of sand grains, spilling into the central depression. As for those on the wet foreshore, they were even then disappearing as the tide swept across them. Casual visitors would see only a few odd depressions, that had lost the crisp outlines embedded by the creature's weight, and could have been made by anything.

The local fishermen, who had an intimate knowledge of the bays and inlets around their island home, would of course know differently. This was how the Maltese housekeeper Anna had known of the danger she left unspecified. As for the girls, they said nothing at the time. It seemed unwise to let their father know they had been wandering over the cliffs in the hours before dawn.

This story casts an interesting sidelight on Scandinavian folklore. A creature that figures largely in this Viking mythology is the terrible Kraken, which was said to have been a squid of such an enormous size that even these fearless sea warriors were afraid of it.

The Kraken was long dismissed as an exaggerated account of the giant squid. This denizen of the warm waters off Central America has been conservatively estimated to attain a length of 55 feet.

The Kraken was said to be many times the length of the Viking longboats and they were well over 55 feet. Another point worth noting is that the giant squid is found only off the coasts of America. Only a handful of Scandinavian mariners ever reached this part of the world, yet so many folk talkes have been related about them down through the centuries that it is possible the true Kraken was to be found nearer home, off the European costs.

Another and sobering thought to point the existence of a squid even larger than the giant of American wa-

ters is the circumstantial evidence provided by the squid's deadly enemy—the sperm whale. This whale, whose maximum length can be about 83 feet, is frequently found to have scars along its sides as could only be inflicted by the vicious beak of a squid, the devil fish of the tropics.

The point that has caused many whalers an uneasy thought is that the size and depth of the wound indicates a beak that could only belong to a squid many times longer than the official maximum of 55 feet!

And some whales have had scars that could only have come from suckers two feet across and more!

Contrast that with the size of the squid accepted as the "giant," whose suckers attain a maximum breadth of nine inches only, and an idea of the monster squid can be gained.

So the saying "there are bigger fish in the sea than ever came out of it" may prove to be true of the squid at least.

THE GHOST OF PARCHMENT HILL

It's rather illogical really, but quite a few people think of ghosts as something belonging to the past, when people were supposedly more ignorant and less scientifically minded than they are now.

Even if the cynics admit, however tentatively that

there might be something in this ghost business, the last place they would think of encountering one would be in their cars as they drive along a main road of a busy city.

One of these cynics is George Marchant—or, rather, he was. This 30-year-old manager for a large computer organization is hard-headed, logical and very shrewd. In some ways, perhaps, even rather sober-minded, so the last thing you could call him would be over-imaginative.

Yet, it was Marchant who began to cross the line between cynic and believer one May evening in 1965 and in the end, his conversion was a swift one.

That evening, he left work at 6:15, about 45 minutes later than usual, and as he drove out of the firm's parking lot, he realized with some relief that he had just missed the last of the rush hour. It was a fine spring evening—though perhaps the sheer beauty of it was rather lost on George. He was far more concerned with the new gaskets he was going to fit under the hood that evening, than anything else, for George's car was his pride and joy.

The clear road in front of him was an unaccustomed pleasure and almost without his noticing it, the needle was just nudging 65 when it happened. . . .

He suddenly felt himself jerked forward so violently that only by clutching the wheel hard and stiffening his arms did he avoid colliding with the windshield. The tires screamed as they skidded along the road, the wheel twisted in his hands and then, quite suddenly, the car stopped. Something made George glance down at his feet and, as he did so, he saw the brake pedal rising slowly from the depressed position. "I didn't do that," was his first startled thought. "My foot was on the *accelerator*. . . ."

Or *was* it? George knew perfectly well that even

the most experienced driver could sometimes mistake the foot-brake for the accelerator.

By the time George arrived home, about twenty minutes later, he'd managed to put the incident in the back of his mind. But later that evening, when the gaskets were safely fitted, he jacked the car up and scrambled underneath to have a look at the brakes. They were perfectly all right, so he checked the disc brakes—also perfectly all right.

Even so, George felt a bit unsettled, because he was *sure* his foot hadn't been on the brake. Then what was the explanation for the uncanny incident? George didn't like the inexplicable; the incident rankled in his mind for a long time before he mentioned it to his friend, Joe Wheaton, who worked in the same office.

"You must've made a mistake; probably your foot slipped," was Joe's reaction. "What else could it be? A ghost?"

George wasn't amused at Joe's humor. "All right," Joe went on, seeing the look on his friend's face. "I'll tell you what I suggest. It's unlikely you'd make the same mistake twice, isn't it? Just to satisfy yourself, take the car along that stretch of road again at about the same speed and see what happens. I'll come with you as witness!"

For the rest of that day, George felt unhappy. Either way, he supposed, he was going to look like a fool, the sort of fool who didn't know what his right foot was doing, or the sort who imagined things.

"Okay," said Joe, as they walked to the parking lot at precisely six o'clock that evening, "I expect the road's clear now. I'll watch the pedals and you tell me when we get near the spot where it happened."

The car moved out into a clear road and was soon bowling along at over forty miles per hour. It climbed

the hill, then quickened its speed as it reached the top and began to run down the other side. A large white house flashed past on George's right, which meant that they were nearly there, so George pressed hard on the accelerator and the needle swept past sixty. . . .

Joe just about had time to fix his eyes on the pedals before they felt a hard jerk. Both men shot forward and Joe struck his shoulder on the dashboard, but somehow he managed to keep his gaze on the pedals all the time—and suddenly he gave a startled cry: "The brake pedal—it went down . . . and you weren't touching it!"

The car jerked to a stop and suddenly the blare of a horn sounded shrilly in their ears. Both men instinctively started back as a van shot in front of them barely feet away and disappeared into a side turning.

Both knew what the other was thinking. If they hadn't stopped—if *something* hadn't stopped them—there would've been an appalling smash which they couldn't possibly have survived.

George told me later that he hardly knew which had scared him more—the brush with death or the possibility that something supernatural had taken control of his car.

Later that evening, they returned to George's home, jacked the car up and checked the brakes thoroughly. But there was nothing wrong with them. A few days later, a check by George's garage confirmed his findings.

"What's wrong, George?" asked Fred Barrow, the garage owner, noticing his client's strained, preoccupied look. George hesitated for a moment, then told him. He didn't know whether to be startled or relieved by Fred's reply. "You're the fourth this week; I think the motorists around here are going mad. Every few

weeks, we get a spate of drivers saying they've been stopped on Parchment Hill. And it's always about six o'clock in the evening.

"Mind you, whatever's causing it has good traffic sense. There was a very messy smash on that spot not five months ago. . . ."

By early July, George had been turning the mystery over and over in his mind for nearly two months and it had become a positive obsession—more particularly because four other motorists, whom he traced through the garage, confirmed his own experiences.

However, George had to wait another five months before the full explanation began to dawn on him, and the way in which it did was the most unnerving episode of all.

It was November, and even when George left work on time, the daylight was already beginning to fade and the night mists hovered eerily about on the road. That particular day in mid-month, George had worked late again and it was with a feeling of trepidation that he realized that this was the first time he had done so since that day in May when Joe had been with him.

It was again six o'clock when he walked slowly down to the parking lot. His feet seemed to be dragging, as if they were somehow unwilling to carry him. Suddenly, he was angry as he realized that every shadow, every sudden sound was unnerving him. This, he told himself very firmly, this was certainly imagination.

His car stalled twice and impatiently George kicked down on the accelerator and pulled out the choke hard in an effort to keep the engine turning over.

"About time I put in anti-freeze," he mumbled to himself, but somehow he felt that wasn't the explanation.

It was only when he got out onto the road that he began to feel a little happier. The roar of the engine

as it responded to his foot on the accelerator, the swish of the windshield wipers as they obediently started up when his finger pushed the button, the ticking of the indicators, the smooth feel of the gears—all this convinced George that, after all, a car was only a machine, the least likely of all agents for a supernatural happening.

He noticed, though, that the fog was rolling up fast, hanging on an ever-thickening backcloth of darkness as time went on. George dropped speed and found himself creeping along at a mere twenty miles per hour. Great floating masses of fog seemed to be coming at him out of the darkness. He saw what looked like a faint splash of white on his right—the white house, he thought to himself. At least he knew where he was; another few miles and he'd be safely home.

He switched on the radio. Reception was bad, but its cracklings and hissing were almost friendly sounds in this lonely, eerie world of fog and darkness.

The fog was still coming at him in great, billowing folds when he suddenly realized that he saw in front of him a form that he recognized: it was another car.

He braked and sighed with relief. He was so close to the other car that he could see its number plate, despite the fog. The first three letters—OLP—had just registered on his mind when another shape loomed out of the fog. It was a large van.

George stared in horrow as he saw the van ram the car in front of him. Locked together, the two vehicles reared up in the air, then crashed down, their shapes jagged and twisted. Scrambling out of the car George began to run forward. He didn't know if it was the shock of what he had seen, but he sensed that the fog was unusually cold about him. Then, he stood still and looked quickly back: he could just see his own car headlights glimmering out of the gloom, but

as for the wreckage of the crash he had witnessed seconds earlier . . . *it was nowhere to be seen. . . .*

Then George realized that even during that moment of impact he had not heard a sound. The car in front had seemed to be drifting along in the fog and the crash had been played out in a silence he now felt was nightmarish. That was when George knew with absolute certainty that he had seen a ghost.

Next morning, he went to Fred Barrow's garage and his first words were: "That crash you told me about last May, the one on the hill. *When* did it happen?"

"January" Fred replied, "We picked up the wreckage. It was a van and a car."

"What was the number of the car?" asked George, his voice trembling.

"Hey, what's up?" Fred sounded concerned.

George told him. "I saw the number plate or part of it . . . it was OLP. . . ."

Fred strode quickly to his office. "The book for last January," he said to the young girl sitting there. Then he flicked quickly through the pages. "It was January 2nd . . ." he said and looked at George strangely. "The car license number began with OLP, but it was too badly smashed up at the time for us to read any more. I know it belonged to a Mr. Vivian, though. He hadn't been in the district long when it happened. I remember he was always saying they should have put traffic lights on Parchment Hill.

"Lots more people are saying it now . . . we've had cars being stopped there almost every night this month, without the drivers touching the brakes . . . just like your was."

Two weeks later, George was driving home on a night which he saw thankfully was clear and crisp when he saw the new traffic lights. And he knew

then that he would never meet the ghost of Parchment Hill again.

And so it proved, because in the years that have passed since that extraordinary spring, summer and autumn, there has not been one accident, and not one car has been mysteriously stopped.

It seems as though the ghost of Mr. Vivian has proved its point. Everyone's saying so . . . and George Marchant most vociferously of them all.

THE MYSTERY OF THE MAID OF FRANCE

On the morning of May 30, 1431, a slow procession wound its way through the streets of Rouen. At its head walked a slim girl, her head bowed, completely covered by a long cloak, surrounded by a squad of heavily-armed English soldiers. Eight hundred more soldiers lined the route, holding back the thousands of townspeople who watched in silence as the girl walked slowly on towards the town square—and the stake, piled high with faggots and brushwood, that stood at its center.

An hour later, it was all over. Still in silence, the crowd watched as the soldiers raked aside the glowing embers of the fire, revealing the charred, unrecognizable thing that had once been a beautiful girl. So died Jehanne la Pucelle, otherwise known as Joan of Arc.

Or *did* she? For this is the very question historians are still asking today. Both the life and the death of the Maid of France are shrouded in mystery—and it is now generally accepted that a large part of the legend that has grown up around her is false, just as Britain's legend of King Arthur is a highly embroidered version of a few basic facts.

According to the legend, Jehanne la Pucelle was a young peasant girl who lived in the village of Domremy, on the border of Lorraine. One day, while working in the fields, she heard strange "voices" which told her that she had been chosen by God to save France. It was 1429, and the Hundred Years' War was dragging on to its close. The conflict had flared up again in 1415, largely as the result of the ambition of England's King Henry V—an ambition encouraged by the factions of Burgundy and Armagnac and the madness of Charles VI of France.

After the first campaign, which ended with the capture of Harfleur and the English victory at Agincourt, Henry set about the conquest of Normandy. By 1422, one-third of France was in English hands. Henry V died that year, and so did the mad King Charles—and the people of unoccupied France acknowledged his only surviving son, the Dauphin Charles, as their rightful ruler. The war went on, with the English making slow but relentless progress, and it was at that point, so the story goes, that Jehanne la Pucelle heard the mysterious voices.

She arrived on the scene at a time when the Dauphine's rule was tottering on the brink of collapse. The English and their allies ruled in Paris; the Dauphin had been forced to flee to Chinon in the Loire region, which was still loyal to him. He was surrounded by warlords who were hungry for power; only one or two were to be trusted.

And one of the trusted ones was a young nobleman named Gilles de Rais—Marshal of France at the age of twenty-six. The day when the name of Gilles de Rais would become synonymous with fear and horror, with the slaughter of innocent children in hideous orgies of lust and bloodshed, was still in the future. In 1429, his reputation was no worse than that of any other French nobleman.

Gilles was present at the Dauphin's side when a herald announced the arrival of the shepherdess from Lorraine who claimed that she had been chosen by God to save France. He watched her curiously as she knelt before the Dauphin; whether it was his imagination or not, he seemed to sense that she radiated a strange power, and he was suddenly convinced that she was all she claimed to be.

The Dauphin entrusted Joan to his care, and the two became inseparable. He taught her all he knew about the art of warfare, and rode with her at the head of an army to relieve Orleans, which was besieged by the English. Some historians suspect that Joan's effect in boosting the morale of the French army may have been due in no small measure to the obvious adoration attached to her by Gilles and his fellow knights.

It appears that Joan succeeded in touching the innermost recesses of Gille's mind. She reproached him for his growing excesses and persuaded him to return to his legitimate wife, Catherine de Thouars, whom he had abandoned. But his reformation was to last only for a few months; first came Joan's defeat at the gates of Paris, which was a bitter blow to him—and when she was captured in a skirmish near Compiegne on May 24, 1430, he plunged into a whirlpool of debauchery in an attempt to lift the dark cloud of sorrow from his mind.

A year later, when he heard that she had been ex-

ecuted, he embarked on a hellish merry-go-round of murder, torture and orgy that has had few parallels in history. For Gilles de Rais was no longer a sane man; he had loved, perhaps even revered, Joan, and the report of her death snapped his reason.

Joan of Arc was dead, tortured and burned by the brutal English—or so it seemed. For five hundred years, this remained the accepted version of her fate. But today, a number of documents have come to light in France which point to the possibility that although a girl did die at the stake in Rouen on that May day in 1431, that girl may not have been Joan of Arc. . . .

A careful examination of the ancient records of the town of Orleans has revealed that early in 1436, the town councilors received a letter from a woman who claimed that she was the Maid. The woman lived in Metz, in eastern France, and was married to a gentleman named Robert des Armoises. According to a chronicle of Metz dated 1439, the woman was identified as Joan of Arc by the Maid's brothers, Pierre and Jehan de Lys. The people of Orleans appear to have generally believed that Madame des Armoises really was Joan, who had somehow miraculously survived; other accounts, however, state that she was found to be an impostor.

In the summer months, Robert des Armoises and his wife lived in the Chateau de Gaulny, which still stands. Significantly, the arms of Joan of Arc are displayed next to those of the Armoises family, and several years ago, during restoration work, a portrait of Joan in armor was found above a hidden fourteenth-century fireplace.

In 1452, a "Trial of Rehabilitation" was held in France, which dragged on for four years, and at the end of it the Maid's name was cleared of the charges of sorcery which had been brought against her over

twenty years earlier. Nothing, however, was said about the possibility that she may have survived.

We do not know when Jeanne des Armoises died, but there is a woman named des Armoises buried in the little churchyard of Pullingy-sur-Mardon, twelve miles from Nancy. And the parish records tell us that when Joan was beatified in 1909, nearly five centuries after her death, the parish priest of Pullingy raised a funeral plaque which bore the arms of Joan of Arc and the inscription: "Here lies the most exalted and powerful woman, Jehanne du Lys, Maid of France, wife of Robert des Armoises, Chevalier, Nobleman of Trichemont, who passed from this life in April, 1449. Pray for her."

But even supposing that the evidence is authentic, and that Joan of Arc ended her days naturally and in relative obscurity, one question remains: how did she escape from, or why was she released by, the English? There is no doubt that she did fall into their hands, for the story of her capture is well authenticated. She was actually taken prisoner at Compiegne by the Bourguignons, who were allies of the English, and was sold to the latter by the Count of Luxembourg. She was subsequently found guilty of heresy during a "show trial" before an ecclesiastical court, and sentenced to death by burning.

Faced with such a penalty, only one factor could have secured her release: the fact that she was found to be not a peasant girl at all, but a woman of noble birth. There is a theory which suggests that she was the illegitimate daughter of Isabel of Bavaria, the half-sister of Charles VII—the Dauphin—and that the Duke of Orleans was her father; as a baby she was entrusted to the care of the d'Arc family of Domremy. This would perhaps explain why, shortly before her birth

was announced, mysterious torch-bearers visited the d'Arc household during the night.

If Joan really was Isabel's daughter, it would explain a lot of other things too. It would explain for example, how she was able to amaze the French Court by revealing intimate details of the Dauphin's private life; he was her uncle. It would explain, too, why she bore the arms of the House of Orleans; it was her father's house, and the fact that she bore its arms had nothing to do with lifting the siege of the city of Orleans.

And, finally, if Joan had been anything other than of noble birth, Robert des Armoises, one of the foremost knights of the time, could not possibly have married her.

Fact or fiction? Unless diligent research turns up more documentary evidence, the true story of Joan of Arc will probably never be known. But if she did escape a hideous death, that fact alone raises yet another mystery: who was the girl who perished so bravely at the stake?

ISLAND OF DOOM

One moment the Pacific Ocean around him was nothing more than what the lookout expected: an expanse of water stretching from horizon to horizon, with nothing to be seen but gently undulating waves.

A moment later, there it was—an island—a dark silhouette edged with trees, just discernible in the black night.

"Impossible," murmured Captain Soulas of the French barque *Federation*, as the lookout's startled cry of "Land, Ho!" echoed out on that July night 79 years ago. For the captain knew well that they were about 300 miles from the nearest land.

Soulas felt not a little irritated, because the crew just couldn't get out of their heads that on this, the *Federation's* maiden voyage, the ship was jinxed.

First, she had run aground off Billiton Island in the Java Sea; then at Saigon a sudden squall had struck her, driving her onto the river bank. And now, the lookout was seeing things.

"Get that man down here!" Soulas bellowed. The man came down and, trembling, stood before the captain. "I saw it, sir, I swear I saw an island."

Soulas was suddenly aware of a hushed silence on deck. Every man within earshot was standing there, listening; all work had ceased. He knew only too well that when fear takes hold of a crew at sea, anything could happen.

"All right, then," he snapped, "get below." He turned to First Lieutenant Philippe Grandier: "Send another man up."

"Lacroix!" Grandier ordered. "Get up to the masthead!" Lacroix hesitated, fear flickering over his grizzled face. "Go on!" There was a certain menace in Grandier's voice, and years of obeying orders proved too strong a habit for Lacroix.

He scrambled up to the lookout post, and peered into the blackness ahead, heart pounding, but there was nothing there. Lacroix relaxed.

Down on deck, something like normality returned. Only the usual sounds disturbed the night air—the wind

sighing in the great sails, the blocks straining, the timbers groaning. Idly, Grandier raised his glass to his eye and swept it across the horizon, but there was nothing to be seen.

He leaned back in one corner of the bridge and was just filling his pipe when a sudden hoarse cry startled him, scattering the tobacco onto the floor. "Land ahead—I see land!" Lacroix's voice sounded terrified.

Quickly, Grandier stuffed his spyglass into his belt and scrambled up to the masthead. Lacroix's trembling finger was pointing straight ahead. Grandier raised his spyglass. He gasped. There, quite clear, was the outline of an island, the long tendrils of its palms waving gently in the Pacific summer breeze. A sudden fear shivered down his spine; they seemed to be beckoning the ship to come on to some terrible fate.

"Stop it!" Grandier told himself sternly. "There must've been some error in navigation. Perhaps the compass. . . ."

The words tumbling around in his mind ceased abruptly. Grandier gripped the rail. He could now see the island with the naked eye. Without a word to the lookout, he scrambled down onto the deck, almost colliding with Captain Soulas as he ran up from his quarters.

"Sir, the island . . . it's there!" The lieutenant's words were disjointed.

Soulas snatched the spyglass from Grandier's sweating hand and bellowed: "Helmsman!"

"We're well on course, sir, there's no mistake!" the helmsman replied, anticipating the captain's question.

Soulas swung the spyglass and, almost at once, focused on a tree; then on a small hillock; then, as the moon rode out from behind a cloud, on the beach, with its sand sparkling in the pale, colorless light.

Soulas wasted no time wondering at this startling,

totally unexpected vision. "Alter course 90 degrees to port! Shorten sail!"

The firm words, uttered in the captain's deep tones, shook the deck hands out of their stupor. The helmsman swung the wheel hard and the *Federation*, her speed greatly reduced, began to sail parallel to the coast of the mysterious island.

Quickly, Captain Soulas checked the compass, then the log, then his books on navigation. The ship was exactly on course, just as the helmsman had said. Yet, though hundreds of ships followed the same route every year, not one had ever reported sighting land in this latitude.

The crew lined the starboard rails, staring unbelievingly at the great mass as it slipped past. Then: "Land ahead!" The cry came hoarsely from the masthead.

For a moment, there was silence. Then, everyone on deck seemed to be shouting at once. "Look at it, it's haunted—it must be!"

"What's it called?"

"Why isn't it on the maps?"

Then came a cry shriller than the rest: "Look! It's not to starboard any more! It's straight ahead!"

Soulas and Grandier rushed to the side of the bridge. It was true: there was nothing to starboard but a mass of water. Their glance swung to one side—the island *was* straight ahead. The sight had been so startling when they had first seen it that the outlines of the island seemed etched on their minds; there was the ridged mass, the hillock and the trees—the same island. But it had moved!

Soulas shook himself quickly. "Alter course! Alter. . . ."

He got no further. His words were cut short by a tremendous crash. The *Federation* shuddered from stern

to bows; the vibration seemed to shake through the captain's body till it battered at his very bones.

Then, just as suddenly, all was still. The *Federation* drifted on and the experienced Soulas could tell that whatever had caused the crash had inflicted no damage.

Then, he noticed something else. The timbers, which normally creaked and groaned their way through every voyage, were silent. The rush of wind in the sails sounded no more. In their place came a low murmur that grew and grew into a shriek till it filled the stupefied ears of every man on board.

As it rose higher and higher, like some terrible banshee wailing out threats of doom, there was a sudden harsh scraping noise—the death agony of a ship as its timbers are ripped apart by rocks. But there were no rocks, and the *Federation,* obviously undamaged, kept on her steady course.

Then, above the weird, unearthly noises, came the unmistakable cry of a man stricken by terror. At the same moment, a tree crashed down out of the black night, splintering the fo'castle. The cry was abruptly silenced. The tree rolled slightly, then lay still.

Swallowing hard, Grandier went over and kicked it with his foot. It was absolutely solid, its gnarled trunk as real as any tree to be seen on land. Grandier felt a shower of small, wet nodules falling on top of him. He swung around and as he did so, another tree crashed down inches away from him, scattering soil and leaves all over the deck.

Onee more the *Federation* shuddered, but this time, she was stuck fast. She had run aground.

Immediately, the long habit of command stirred Soulas to action. He started bellowing out orders to clear the deck and inspect the hull for leaks.

"Take soundings," he ordered Grandier, and as he

watched, his second-in-command slipped the lead over the side. For minutes, it seemed, Grandier was paying out the line, until all that was left was the frayed end held between his fingers.

Captain and lieutenant exchanged a swift glance. If they were to believe their eyes, the *Federation* had run aground on an island surrounded by sea of ocean depth. The lead had not touched bottom.

Despite the inexplicable happenings of the last few minutes, there did not seem to be anything radically wrong with the ship, as an inspection of the hull revealed. It would be a comparatively simple operation to float her off with the help of a light wind. But, they would have to wait until dawn.

The night was a long and sleepless one. No one dared close his eyes and, when they tired of wandering the decks, the men just leaned on the rails and stared out at the sinister silhouette of the island which held their ship prisoner.

Next morning, boats were lowered and after hours of straining at the oars, the *Federation* floated free. A light breeze filled her sails and she moved slowly out to sea.

No one dared watch as the island fell behind, seeming to shrink in the vast ocean until it slipped below the horizon. Only when they were certain it could be seen no more did the crew glance around to see, with heartfelt relief, an empty sea.

Days later, the *Federation* reached the Philippines. Not unexpectedly, no one believed Soulas's story and the mysterious island quickly became a favorite quayside joke, a means of poking disbelieving fun at the *Federation's* crew as they tried without success to convince their fellow sailors of the horrors they had just experienced.

The official view was that the whole episode was

quite impossible, because there was no record whatsoever of land existing where Soulas reported it; the Pacific may have been a mysterious, unknown ocean a century before, but by then its myriad islands had all been charted.

It was no more than Soulas and Grandier had expected. They knew that in this year of 1890 many extraordinary beliefs about the oceans had been proved ridiculous by centuries of exploration. Insisting that what they had seen was true would be quite useless; the only way to prove their story was to find the island again.

Soulas and Grandier spent four impatient weeks in the Philippines while *Federation* was refitted and her crew rested. Then, towards the end of August, she set sail again, not southwards as the ship's owners had instructed, but back towards the latitude of the mysterious island.

For days on end and for several sleepless nights, Soulas and Grandier, who had become like men obsessed, stood by the helmsman to make sure that no navigational error occurred, their eyes constantly scanning the undulating ocean, as they consulted the charts and checked the compass.

The crew watched, sympathy mixed with fear as they drew nearer and nearer to the scene of their former terror. As each night fell, the sailors scanned the darkness, hoping against hope that somehow their eyes had been deceived, even that they had all been dreaming, that the island really did not exist.

It was on the fifth night that the *Federation* reached the point where the island ought to have been.

But there was nothing there.

Thinking that perhaps days and nights of vigil had impaired his judgment, Soulas resolved to circle the area until the island was found. *Federation* swept

around and around in ever-widening circles for hour after hour, till at last, Soulas felt bound to give up. All he saw was stretch after stretch of limitless ocean. The island had disappeared.

Gruffly, he ordered the helmsman to alter course southwards. Then, he stumbled to his cabin not to sleep, but to lie wide awake, wondering.

In due course, the *Federation* reached her destination and unloaded her cargo. In the years that followed, she plied regularly on the Pacific route without mishap.

Soulas died three years later, still obsessed by the strange island and what had happened there; still not absolutely certain whether the incident had been fact or a figment of the imagination.

The same year, the *Federation* was sold to a new owner. She was taken off her previous Pacific route and began to ply between Europe and Madagascar. The three-masted barque gained a reputation for being a stout, fast ship and the accidents of her maiden voyage were thought of, if they were thought of at all, as nothing but "growing pains."

Then, on the dark night of February 20, 1896, near Providence Island, north east of Madagascar, a cyclone of such force struck the *Federation* that even her strength could not ride it out. She was driven helpless onto the low, lonely coast of the island and completely wrecked.

The crew managed to scramble ashore, but as the captain clambered over the splintered deck, his foot slipped and he fell headlong. As he fell, his hand touched something cold and wet and, as he looked, he saw it was a long green tendril. Scattered around it were pieces of earth. . . .

The captain was Grandier, the only man on board who knew the *Federation's* mysterious story, and in

that moment, his thought flew back six years to that dark July night in the Pacific.

Had this final wreck of the *Federation* at long last solved the puzzle, he wondered . . . ?

Had the island, indeed, been a phantom, as everyone had said, but had a new dimension now been added to the mystery? Had what had happened there been a premonition of the *Federation's* final fate? These were questions which nobody has ever been able to answer. . . .

LONDON'S GHOST BUS

Two events happened in London in the summer of 1933 that I shall always remember. They were in no way connected, yet there was a curious and sympathetic link between them. Firstly, I started in my first job as a reporter for a national newspaper in Fleet Street.

Secondly, a surprisingly large number of residents in London's fashionable Kensington were being startled out of their wits by a unique and remarkably solid looking ghost. It was the phantom of a London bus.

I can't remember now how the news first leaked into our office, but knowing of my interest even in those days in the occult, my news editor sent me off on what was to become my first front page assignment. It took several days of patient questioning among the shopkeepers, housekeepers, and wealthy residents

in the St. Mark's Road-Cambridge Gardens area before I found anybody who would admit to seeing this unusual manifestation. But once the first man's story appeared in print, it seemed that there was no shortage of other, reputable eyewitnesses, the majority of whom admitted that they kept their mouths shut for fear of being ridiculed.

However, once they knew that their own experience was by no means unique, this ghost bus became one of the seven day wonders of the metropolis. The sightings were invariably reported around about a dangerous road junction in the district mentioned earlier, where there had been many fatal and near-fatal accidents. And as my inquiry proceeded, it became obvious that at least a few of these had been caused by the sudden appearance of this spectral vehicle.

During the day, motorists driving along Cambridge Gardens, unless familiar with the quiet residential road leading out of Ladbroke Grove, were totally unprepared for the Number Seven buses that turned quickly out of St. Mark's Road into Cambridge Gardens. There had been many close shaves as a result.

But it was at night mainly that drivers reported seeing a bus traveling down St. Mark's Road and told how, on swerving to avoid it, they had looked around to find no bus there at all. At that time of night all the regular buses had stopped running.

Then a car crashed into a house on the corner of Cambridge Gardens. This occured at about one in the morning, and the driver told those who rushed out to his aid that he suddenly saw a bus, swerved to avoid it, hitting the wall. Yet, when he turned to look, there was no bus there!

A mechanic at a garage then disclosed that several motorists had hold him of their encounters with the phantom bus. He added that one night the foreman and

an assistant were on duty at the garage when the foreman saw a bus out in front, evidently wanting gasoline, and called to the assistant to attent to it. But the mystified assistant came back to say that the bus had gone.

During the next few months several more people reported seeing the ghost bus. Then in June the following year, at a Paddington inquest, it was strongly suggested that the apparition was the cause of a night collision between two cars at the junction. One of the drivers involved, an experienced road user, died in the crash; the other driver, and a pedestrian who had paused at the junction and saw the crash, both said that the dead man, driving a small car, had suddenly and for no apparent reason accelerated as if wanting to get quickly across the junction; the larger car was unable to avoid him and they struck, after which the small car veered off, crashed into a lamp-post, overturned and burst into flames. There was no other traffic about at the time.

The inquest court now heard how the dangerous junction was firmly believed to be haunted by the phantom bus; how hundreds of people in North Kensington talked about the apparition and dozens claimed to have seen it; how on nights after the regular bus service had stopped, people living there had been awakened by the roar of a bus coming down the street and rushed to the window to see a brilliantly lighted double-decker bus approaching *with no visible driver or passengers.* According to all the witnesses, the bus went careening to the corner of Cambridge Gardens and St. Mark's Road, then vanished completely.

Was it a late staff bus? A glistening reflection of car headlights from a traffic stanchion on rainy nights? These and many other explanations were put forward, but

none was sound. The phantom, according to witnesses, appeared a few more times before stopping its one o'clock run, by which time it had proved beneficial in one respect at least; it drew the serious attention of the authorities to a road blind spot.

Only three years earlier a phantom motor coach was said to make an appearance in the East Riding of Yorkshire, though this seemed to be linked with a recent tragic holiday crash which occurred on Garrowby Hill in August 1931, when a coach traveling from Bridlington to Liverpool collied with a car and crashed into a tree; two people were killed and twenty injured. During the late autum rumors spread that the lonely road was haunted by a spectral vehicle which appeared out of the darkness traveling silently at enormous speed. It seemed to appear only on moonless nights or when there was fog, though the motorists who encountered it were in no doubt about its ghostly reality and strongly rejected the theory that it could be a trick of the mists. A series of incidents on the road was attributed to the alarming passage of the phantom coach and villagers were afraid to venture along the road at night. The following statement by one motorist who saw the phantom is typical of others:

"Last night, I saw a huge vehicle silently approaching. Thinking it was a bus or truck, I felt no fear. But when it drew nearer I noticed that it made no sound. It rushed towards me at a great speed and I turned the wheel sharply. When I looked again the mystery bus had disappeared and I had to concentrate on preventing my car from rushing into the ditch."

All appearances of the spectral coach were made near the scene of the accident the previous August. Lord Irwin, through whose Garrowby Estate that part of the road ran, had erected a five-foot high cross

at the roadside fixed on a wooden base, in memory of the two people who lost their lives.

Accidents account for much road phenomena. In the West Riding in 1937 a stretch of the Ingleton-Lancaster road was haunted for some weeks by the figure of a man in a blue suit who had been knocked down and killed. An account of their uncanny experience was given at the time by Walter Holdsworth, of Whitley Bay, a passenger in a car driven by John Harrison. "We had just left Ingleton when I saw a man wearing a navy blue suit start to cross the road in front of us. I realized that Harrison could not avoid hitting him and jerked myself back ready for the shock. Then the man disappeared. There was no bumping of the car to indicate we had hit anything.

"I said nothing for a moment and Harrison asked: 'Did you see that man?' I replied that I had seen the man three times on the road since a pedestrian was killed there three weeks ago."

The ghosts in these cases, and there are many, are not only seen shortly after a fatal accident, but linger on sometimes for a long period. In an incident reported from Berkshire in 1964 the ghost seen was believed to be that of a man who had died in a village road accident three years before. Two sisters, Mrs. Margaret Prior and Mrs. Marcia Colling-Hill were driving through the village on West Hendred, near Wantage, when in the dark they saw a man in a cap and overcoat dash in front of their car. Mrs. Prior, who was driving, said, "I could not possibly have avoided hitting him. I braked instantly and prepared myself for the bump, but nothing happened. I was shocked. My sister and I turned around but could see nothing or nobody." It was afterwards that they learned that an old man had previously been killed in a car accident near the spot.

Motorists on a lonely stretch of the main Lanchester-Durham road in 1931 were troubled by a similar darting apparition, though in this case with nothing to explain it. There was many a shriek of brakes in the woodland quiet as cars were brought hastily to a stop. Bewildered drivers said afterwards they had seen the mysterious figure of a man dive into the roadway almost under their wheels, but on walking back, expecting to find a body, they had found nothing.

Similarly there was nothing to explain the road haunting near South Mimms, Hertfordshire, during the spring of 1935 which was witnessed by motorists and residents. Drivers who saw a figure suddenly appear in the road and hold up its hand stopped, thinking there had been an accident, but the ghost vanished immediately, as mysteriously as it had appeared. The then vicar of South Mimms, the Rev. Allan Hay, confessed that when he first saw the specter while cycling he was so alarmed that he pedaled for all his worth to the vicarage.

This haunted road was once the main route to the north and was notorious for the number of highwaymen who infested it; several of the brigands were believed to lie buried in the old, gray churchyard of South Mimms. A popular theory was that the ghost was the shade of one of them which returned.

An extraordinary case in which a road haunting was, to the majority of people, successfully explained away only to recur again within months, happened at Leatherhead, Surrey, in 1930-31. Swan Corner in 1930 was known among motorists as one of the worst crossroads in England. Its corners, difficult inclines, and blind approaches formed a dangerous trap for the unwary. Late that year it achieved fresh notoriety when motorists reported that at dusk, on approaching the corner from the south, they were "held up" by the tall

figure of a woman standing some 200 yards south of the crossroads. In most cases the ghostly figure disappeared as soon as the alarmed motorist stopped. In one instance the driver of a heavily laden lorry saw the figure in the gleam of his headlights too late to pull up, and thought a serious accident had occurred. He was relieved, though puzzled, when a search failed to reveal the victim or any evidence of an impact.

A local investigator then examined the road carefully and found that as a result of an accident, a quantity of corrosive acid had been dropped on the road. The fluid had run into a shallow dip and been absorbed, but the vapor was now inclined to rise from the road, and this could only be seen after dark in the gleam of bright headlights. It rose up in a thin column, which, it was suggested, might with a little imagination be taken as a ghostly form. This very feasible solution to the "haunting" was accepted by almost everyone except a number of drivers who had seen the figure and swore that it was more than simply vapor. Reports of the ghost, however, grew fewer. Then, in the late summer of the following year, there came disturbing reports of a new and different haunting at Swan Corner. Motorists and residents both plainly saw the still figure of a woman in a nurse's uniform lying across the road. Motorists had narrow escapes trying to avoid running over it, and not only they but passers-by as well clearly saw the figure, which disappeared quickly after every sighting. There was nothing vaporous about it and it was far too clearly defined to be explained away as old reflections of light; many points of the nurse's dress, such as the bow and cap, were clear and correct to the smallest detail. The ghost, which some people took to be a warning of an approaching accident, made several more dis-

tinct appearances before vanishing with the onset of winter.

Perhaps of all the road ghosts it is the one seen in broad daylight that produces the keenest sense of shock. A striking example of this is the experience of Miss Nesta Howard, who told a psychical research society:

"In 1937 I was driving along a straight country road near Minety in Wiltshire, about noon on a fine sunny day. The road was wide, with high banks on each side, and on my right the bank was topped with a thick hedge.

"Presently in the distance I saw a man coming towards me, dressed in a cassock and biretta; I knew that there was a village not far off and subconsciously assumed that he had just taken a service. Behind him, also walking towards me, I then saw a nun; and I remember idly thinking it a pity that they could not walk side by side, as they should have had much to discuss! This was really the only reason that I noticed them.

"Before we met they turned to their left and, as I thought, went down a lane at right angles; but when I reached the spot there was no break in the high bank—no lane, no path, no way up to a stile or anything at all. Puzzled, I drove on until I came to the first gate on that side of the road and walked across to look through it. The field was flat and open and stretched back much farther than the place where the two people had been, but there was no sign of them on either side of the bank.

"They had vanished completely!"

Miss Howard, however, was not the only person to have seen these ghosts, for they had been legendary figures in the district for many years. At one time, any

farmer who saw them would refuse to go any further, but turned around and drove straight back home.

Yet, there seemed to be no explanation for their appearances, until about ten years ago, when a road widening scheme was underway. Workmen, clearing away a thick hedgerow found two skeletons half buried in a deep, leaf-chocked pit. Both still had crucifixes around their necks. Nobody ever found out who they were, how they got there, or what happened to them. All that was learned was that one had been a man—and the other a woman. . . .

The remains were buried in the local churchyard and since then, neither of these two ghosts has been seen again.

THE IMMORAL GHOST

At first, it looked just like a case of theft. When Canadian farmer George Dagg traced a two dollar bill that had been stolen from his desk during the night, it seemed fairly obvious that the thief was Tom Dean, a young boy who worked there, because the missing bill was found hidden beneath the mattress of his bed.

But there was no proof that Dean had stolen it—neither was there any real evidence that the money found was Dagg's two dollars. After all, as both the farmer and his wife realized, it could just possibly have been *another* bill. And Dean appeared to be as surprised and as horrified by the discovery as they had been.

Then when an act of apparently anonymous van-

dalism broke out about the farmhouse, the only possible culprit was Dean. So it was decided to have him charged with the theft.

Although he protested his innocence vehemently nobody believed him. It *had* to be him; it could have been nobody else. At least, this was the logical theory —until a ghost made its terrifying presence felt for the very first time! And it sparked off an occult riddle that has constantly intrigued and baffled psychical investigators for the past 80 years!

One of the first of these serious-minded investigators was Percy Woodcock, who visited the Dagg farmhouse in Quebec in November, 1890. But, on the day that he arrived at the scene of the "crimes," the only remarkable thing about the farm was its air of peace and tranquility.

The Daggs received Woodcock politely, regarding him as just one more of the many sightseers who had visited the place during the past three months. That day they expected to spend in peace and quiet, because they had just sent their daughter Dinah over to Dagg's father's house about two miles away—and while she was away the manifestations ceased.

Woodcock was put out by this news. Had he made his long journey for nothing? After some persuasion, the Daggs agreed to send a messenger after Dinah, asking for her return home next day. Reassured by this promise, Woodcock then sat down to talk with the Daggs and hear their story. Afterwards he walked about the district interviewing the neighbors. He made copious notes of everything that he heard, in preparation for a report which he had promised to contribute on his return home to the Brockville *Recorder and Times*.

George Dagg had an astonishing tale to tell. Three months previously, on September 15, he had brought home two notes, a five and a two dollar bill, and giv-

en them to his wife, who put them in a bureau drawer. Next morning the boy Dean, who was working for the Daggs, came down from his bed in the attic and proceeded to light a fire in the cooking stove. Lying on the floor in front of the stove he saw a five dollar bill. He picked it up, took it to Mr. Dagg and told him where he had found it. Dagg then looked in the bureau, and found that the two dollar bill also was missing. He said nothing but told the boy to go out to the barn and milk the cows. When he had gone, Dagg went up to the attic and examined it. There he found the two dollar bill in Dean's bed.

Naturally, the Daggs suspected the boy of having taken both bills. They agreed to say nothing about it but to watch for more evidence. This seemed to be forthcoming soon enough—and in an unpleasant way. Mrs. Dagg spent the morning in the milk house. When she returned to her kitchen, she found a trail of filth running across the floor of her house from the back door to the front. This filth had apparently been taken from the outdoor privy, and wantonly spread indoors.

The Daggs were now convinced that Dean was a thief; and most psychologists would agree with them, since filth of this kind is a well-known accompaniment of theft—the burglar's "trade mark," as the police call it. However, when taxed with his crime, Dean stoutly denied his guilt and protested his innocence. Enraged by his apparent brazenness, Dagg took the boy off to the nearest magistrate, to charge him with the theft.

But as soon as he was gone, a strange thing happened. Mrs. Dagg, left alone, found fresh appearances of the same nasty manifestation—filth in the food cupboard, even in the food itself; filth in the beds, and elsewhere in the house. Clearly Dean had nothing to do with this—probably he was innocent of theft too!

The filth continued, and was soon supplemented by other unpleasant tricks. Milk pans were emptied and butter taken from the crocks found thrown into the milk pans. To protect her eatables, Mrs. Dagg took them up to the attic, which had no doors or windows and only one entrance by a ladder from the kitchen, which she could watch as she went about her household chores. It was no use; the antics continued as before. In addition, dishes were broken and a pitcher of water thrown suddenly in Mrs. Dagg's face.

Two days later the nuisance grew worse. George Dagg was away from home threshing, and his father, John J. Dagg, came over with his wife, to stay with the family during his absence.

While they were all indoors a pane of glass in the front window came crashing indoors as if hit by a big stone thrown from outside. John Dagg hurried out, could see nobody, and hid himself behind a stump to watch for the mischief-maker. While he was watching in front, another window pane was smashed at the back. So he changed his position, hid in the barn, and knocked one of the boards aside to make a peephole from which he could get a clear view of the whole house and grounds.

Still he saw nothing; but after a time Mrs. Dagg came out and called to him distressfully: "Father, you may as well come in; the glass is still breaking." John Dagg went indoors, and the smashing continued until eight panes of glass had been broken. On one occasion a large stone flew through the open front door of the house and hit Mrs. Dagg's four-year-old daughter on the chest, but oddly enough without hurting her at all.

After this, fires began to break out spontaneously, affecting the window curtains and other household ob-

jects. As many as eight fires occurred in the course of a single day.

The prankster—or whatever it was—next turned his attention to hair. One afternoon Dinah, who wore her hair braided in a long pig-tail that hung down her back, cried out that someone was pulling her hair. When Mrs. Dagg looked, she found the pigtail almost severed, as if sawn off roughly by a knife, and hanging by a few strands only. It had to be cut off entirely, for appearance's sake. On the same day little John Dagg also began yelling and, on examination, was found to have his hair cut off, in chunks, close to his scalp.

It is hardly surprising that the family now thought themselves bewitched. Talking this over, they surmised that the trouble must be coming from their next-door neighbor, Mrs. Wallace. For some time past there had been a feud between the Daggs and Wallaces over a boundary line.

George Dagg decided to consult a fortune teller on this point, and went off to see a Mrs. Barnes, of Plum Hollow, who had a reputation as the local "wise woman." Mrs. Barnes confirmed his suspicions. She told him that his troubles were caused by "the Black Art," which was being practiced on him by a woman, a girl and a boy who lived close to his home.

Soon after Dagg had brought back this information the manifestations took on a new form. Dinah began to "see things."

Old Mrs. Dagg was tidying up the bedroom after making the bed, when she heard Dinah scream.

"Oh, grandmother! See the big black thing pulling off the bedclothes!"

The old lady turned, and could see nothing except the clothes, which were bunched up in a heap as if someone had caught them in the middle and was lifting them.

"Where is it, Dinah?"

"Why, don't you see him? He is leaning over the bedstead."

Old Mrs. Dagg was superstitious; perhaps the child could see ghosts. She fetched a whip and handed it to Dinah, telling her to hit the "black thing." After some demur, Dinah complied and struck several blows. A young man named Arthur Smart, a neighbor, happened to be in the house at the time, and, hearing the commotion, came to the door of the bedroom to watch. Half in joke, he urged Dinah to "Give it to him, don't be afraid!"

Dinah redoubled her blows. Suddenly, they all heard a whistling noise, like a pig's squeal. Dinah stopped hitting.

"Now he's gone," she said. And according to her account, the black thing had vanished from the bed at that moment. Later a piece of paper was found pinned to the wall, with a message scrawled on it: "You gave me fifteen cats."

The two younger children, no doubt fascinated by Dinah's vision, soon announced that they too had seen the mysterious thing. Asked to describe it, four-year old Mary said it was like a man with the head, horns and feet of a cow, standing at the front door. Another time she saw the same figure, dressed in white, putting sugar in the oven. The figure turned around and said to her, "Little girl, would you like to go to hell with me?"

The mention of hell suggested that it was high time for the Daggs to call in some spiritual assistance, so the local minister, Mr. Horner, was sent for. He could not come, but his brother arrived, called for a Bible and began to pray over the family. Looking up at the end of his first prayer, he found that the Bible had been removed from the chair in front of him, where

he had laid it down. A search ensued, and the Bible was found in the kitchen oven. Later an inkstand was transferred several times in succession from the kitchen table to the woodshed. Mr. Horner, who was incredulous, undertook to watch it, but it disappeared just the same, under his very eyes.

One day Mrs. John Dagg, holding a bottle of vinegar in her hand, remarked, "I'm quite afraid to set it down, for fear the goblin'll break it." No sooner were the words out of her mouth than a large potato came flying across the room and struck the hand in which she held the bottle.

Out of curiosity a neighbor, John Quinn, who was taking a horse to pasture, called at the Dagg's house to inquire about the disturbances. He carried a halter with him, which he left on the doorstep when he went in. On leaving, he missed the halter, and thinking someone had taken it for a joke, searched high and low for it without success. As Quinn was standing some way off from the house, discussing the matter with Mr. and Mrs. John Dagg, Mrs. George Dagg, Miss Mary Smart and the children, they heard a slight noise in the air, and the missing halter fell down in their midst. There seemed to be no place near from which any concealed person could have thrown it.

Shortly before Mr. Woodcock's visit to the farm, the nature of the penomena changed. Dinah declared that the "ghost" was speaking to her in a gruff voice. This voice constantly followed her about, and the kind of remarks it uttered were not such as an eleven-year old maiden would expect to hear from a stranger. In fact, most of the remarks were grossly indecent.

On Saturday morning, November 16th, Mr. Woodcock, having assimilated the long story outlined above, met Dinah for the first time. She had been described to him as a stout, rosy-cheeked lassie; but if this de-

scription was once correct, it was no longer. Her cheeks were hollow and sunken, her eyes encircled with dark rings, and her body thin and bony. No doubt her condition was due to the "haunting" or to some form of hysteria.

Woodcock opened a conversation. "Well, Dinah, have you seen anything since you came back home?"

"Yes, Mr. Woodcock, only a few minutes ago, as I was coming back from the well, behind the house."

"Let's go and see what it is."

Dinah led Mr. Woodcock around to the open shed at the back of the house. She called out: "Are you there, mister?"

To Mr. Woodcock's intense astonishment, a deep gruff voice, as of an old man, seemingly within four or five feet of him, instantly replied—with a flood of obscenity worthy of a hardened criminal.

Taken aback for a moment, the artist soon pulled himself together and asked: "Who are you?"

"I am the Devil," answered the gruff voice. "I'll have you in my clutches. Get out of this or I'll break your neck."

Mr. Woodcock was not the man to be frightened by threats.

"That kind of language," he said sternly, "may impress farmers or scare kids. It won't go down with me. You—voice, or whatever you are!—ought to be ashamed of yourself for using such filthy talk in front of a young girl!"

The voice responded by calling Woodcock a series of derisive names.

Naturally, it occurred to Woodcock that he was being made the victim of a practical joke. So he examined the shed carefully. It was a bare, open building, where no concealment was possible. Ventriloquism was

Mr. Woodcock's next suspicion, so he turned around to Dinah, who was standing beside him:

"Go to the well," he told her. "Take a drink, and keep your mouth full of water."

The girl did as she was bade, but the voice continued in the same strain as before. Mr. Woodcock was now satisfied that the effect could not be produced by Dinah, especially as her natural voice was piping and high-pitched, while the ghost's voice was gruff and coarse.

At this point they were joined by George Dagg, the farmer. He had already mentioned to Mr. Woodcock that the ghost could apparently write—so Woodcock's next test was in this field.

He laid a pencil and a piece of paper on a bench in the shed, then called out: "Be kind enough to write something that I can show to my friends."

"No," said the voice.

Woodcock pleaded with the voice which, after a while relented and promised to do what he asked. Immediately, as they watched, the pencil lifted itself up off the bench and began to write. Woodcock stepped over to the bench and examined the paper.

"That's no good," he said, "I asked you to write something decent."

The voice became angry. "I'll steal your pencil," it rasped—and at once the pencil soared off the bench, flew through the air, and fell on the floor at the other side of the shed.

George Dagg now suggested that they should adjourn from the shed into the house. The voice followed them, and the conversation was resumed in more comfortable surroundings. The ghost was certainly neither shy nor reluctant to talk. In fact, the conversation went on for the best part of the day—five hours in all, as Mr. Woodcock recorded it in his diary.

As time wore on, various neighbors dropped in to see what was happening, and remained to listen. Towards the end, there was an audience of nearly a score of persons, to all of whom the voice was audible.

The subject of the conversation was the same as before. Mr. Woodcock, treating the voice as if it represented an invisible personality, reasoned with it, and tried to shame it into better behavior and into giving a promise not to molest the Dagg family any more.

For a long time the voice resisted Woodcock's reproaches and those of farmer Dagg, who joined in the conversation. Gradually, however, it began to soften in response to coaxing and reminders that the Daggs had done "it" no harm. First it consented to abandon the use of obscene language. Then it admitted that it had been actuated solely by a spirit of mischief, or, as it termed it, "making fun," and had no ill-will against anyone except Dinah, to whom it showed a definite antipathy, and Woodcock. Lastly, it begged everybody's pardon for what it had done—especially of George Dagg, Mrs. Dagg and the boy Dean, all of whom had been referred to in abusive terms.

During an interval in this long argument Woodcock satisfied himself that there could be no collusion between the "voice" and some other person, by examining the premises from top to bottom. He found it to be an ordinary log-built house, unplastered, with no closets. The four rooms—kitchen, parlor and two bedrooms—were divided merely by thin wooden partitions. He could find nothing suspicious.

Naturally, Mr. Woodcock was curious to get the ghost to give some reason for its behavior. He took down verbatim that part of its conversation which dealt with this point.

Woodcock: "What are your reasons for this persecution of the Dagg family?"

Voice: "Mrs. Wallace sends me."
Woodcock: "Will your engagement with Mrs. Wallace soon cease?"
Voice: "I won't tell you. Shut up! You meddle with the Black Art. I will break your neck, for I'm the Devil, the Son of the Blessed."
Woodcock: "No you won't, nor am I afraid of you. Answer me civilly. I am not your enemy."
Voice: (Answer unfit for publication.)
Woodcock: "Now, spirit, be a decent fellow and use better language, please!"
Voice: "I will, but you keep me here talking all the time, and I'm tired. Go to Mrs. Wallace and make her confess her sins. She's crying, and she's waiting for you, she and the other two."
Woodcock: "I will go soon."
Voice: "No, you won't. You say you will, but you won't."

The voice then called out to Mr. Dagg: "George, I like you. I'll talk to you, not to him."
Dagg: "Why have you been bothering me and my family?"
Voice: "Just for fun."
Dagg: "It wasn't very much fun when you threw a stone and struck little Mary."
Voice: "Poor wee Mary! I didn't mean to hit her. I intended it for Dinah; but I didn't let it hurt her."
Dagg: "If it was only for fun, why did you try to set the house on fire?"
Voice: "I didn't. The fires were always in the daytime, and where you could see them. I'm sorry I did it."
Dagg: "What were you doing when Dinah was away? Why didn't we hear you?"
Voice: "I wanted the people to think it was Dinah."
Woodcock: "Shame on you! If you don't behave better, I'll take Dinah away."

Voice: "If you take Dinah away, I'll try it on little Mary."

The conversation continued in this strain throughout the day, but towards evening the ghost became repentant, apologized to those present, and promised not to use any more obscene language.

After dark, Mr. Woodcock walked over to Mrs. Wallace's and explained to her what had happened, that she had been blamed for causing the trouble. He asked her to come over with him to the Daggs's, which she was at first reluctant to do—understandably, in view of the feeling of the neighborhood. At last Woodcock was successful, and Mrs. Wallace agreed to accompany him.

As soon as they entered the house, which was full of people, the voice cried out: "Old Mother Wallace!" and proceeded to call her names.

Woodcock interrupted the voice and said: "Here now, you have made charges against this woman behind her back. Now make them to her face."
Voice: (to Mrs. Wallace) "Didn't you and Maggie and Willie go to the swamp, and bury a Black Art book that you got in Montreal?"
Mrs. Wallace: "No, I did not."
Voice: "You did."
Mrs. Wallace: "I say I did not."
Voice: "You lie."

The argument continued in this vein for some time, until Mrs. Wallace got the better of it by entangling the voice in several self-contradictory statements. Then it lost its temper and burst out: "Oh, don't bother me so much—you make me lie."

By now the onlookers were completely convinced of Mrs. Wallace's innocence. Thereupon the voice changed its tune, and accused her two children, Willie and Maggie. Woodcock insisted on taking Mrs. Wal-

lace back to her home, and fetching her two children, who stoutly denied that they knew anything about the Black Art, or the book referred to. At one point the voice undertook to take George Dagg the following evening and show him where the book was buried; but a little later it informed the company that no one could now see the book, because "it" had burned it!

Then, once more, the voice became repentant, expressed regret for all the trouble it had caused the Dagg family, and promised Mr. Woodcock that it would say good-bye on the following night (Sunday) at midnight, after which it would bother them no more. Woodcock, no doubt tired out by his long day's work, was not satisfied with this.

"Why not leave immediately?" he asked.

"Because," replied the ghost, "tomorrow there will be a lot more people here, and I want to convince the unbelievers."

No answer was made to this plea; so, at about 2 A.M. the seance came to an end, with Woodcock going off to spend the rest of the short night with Arthur Smart, after arranging to come back to the Daggs's on Sunday morning and finish off his "ghost-laying" operations.

The news of what was expected to happen spread around Clarendon and Shawville like lightning, with the result that huge crowds of sightseers began to arrive at the farm at an early hour. As the day wore on the throng became greater and more excited.

The voice seemed in a mellow mood. It started to talk bright and early, but kept its promise to Woodcock to avoid abuse and obscenity; instead, it kept up a flow of comments on the visitors, and delivered appropriate and amusing remarks about each person as he entered. To those who questioned it, it returned quick answers, which often displayed a surprising, in-

timate knowledge of the private life of the questioner.

A stranger, who afterwards said he came from a distance, asked the voice a question which was answered to his satisfaction, for he turned to the crowd and said that nobody but an angel could have given him such an answer. Apparently both question and answer related to a conversation between himself and his daughter on her deathbed, and no living person except himself knew anything about it.

The reference to the angel produced striking consequences. Someone in the crowd was tactless enough to congratulate the voice on its improved manners, as compared with former occasions.

Quickly the reply came: "I am not that person who used the dirty language. I am an angel from Heaven, sent by God to drive away that fellow!"

Mr. Woodcock, who had by this time resumed his post as moderator, would not let the voice get away with such an impudent claim. He was shocked to see that several waverers in the crowd were inclined to accept the theory of "angelic origin."

"Look here!" he protested. "He's claiming now to be an angel. But only yesterday he was claiming to be the Devil. And his voice hasn't altered one bit!"

Another long argument began between Woodcock and the voice, of which the artist had considerably the better. Gradually the voice became entangled in various inconsistencies and even falsehoods, followed by sharp outbursts of temper. Each time Mr. Woodcock drove his opponent to the wall, by the oft-repeated query: "What's become of your angelic origin now?"

At last everyone agreed that the voice must be a devil pretending to be an angel.

During the Sunday evening Mr. Woodcock drew up

a short report of the manifestations that had occurred before and during his visit. This he read out to the assembled crowd, and asked them to endorse and correct it. He then asked seventeen of those persons most closely connected with the events to sign his report, as evidence of its correctness, as follows:

"To whom it may concern: We, the undersigned, solemnly declare that the following curious proceedings, which began on the 15th day of September, 1889, and are still going on, on the 17th day of November, 1889, in the home of Mr. George Dagg, a farmer living seven miles from Shawville, Clarendon Township, Pontiac County, Province of Quebec, actually occurred as below described.

"1st, that fires have broken out spontaneously through the house, as many as eight occurring on one day, six being in the house and two outside; that the window curtains were burned whilst on the windows, this happening in broad daylight whilst the family and neighbors were in the house.

"2nd, That stones were thrown by invisible hands through the windows, as many as eight panes of glass being broken; that articles such as waterjug, milk pitcher, wash basin, cream jug, butter tub and other articles were thrown about the house by the same invisible agency; a jar of water being thrown in the face of Mrs. John Dagg, also in the face of Mrs. George Dagg, whilst they were busy about their household duties, Mrs. George Dagg being alone in the house at the time it was thrown in her face; that a large dining table was thrown down; a mouth organ which was lying on a small shelf was heard distinctly to be played and was seen to move across the room onto the floor; immediately after, a rocking chair began rocking furiously. That a washboard was sent flying down the stairs from the garret, no one being in the garret at the time.

That when the child Dinah is present, a deep gruff voice like that of an aged man has been heard at various times, both in the house and outdoors, and when asked questions answered so as to be distinctly heard, showing that he is cognizant of all that has taken place, not only in Mrs. Dagg's family but also in the families of the surrounding neighborhood. That he claims to be a discarnated being who died twenty years ago, aged eighty years; that he gave his name to Mr. George Dagg and to Mr. Willie Dagg, forbidding them to tell it. That this intelligence is able to make himself visible to Dinah, little Mary and Johnnie, who have seen him under different forms at different times, at one time as a tall thin man with a cow's head, horns and cloven foot, at another time as a big black dog, and finally as a man with a beautiful face and long white hair, dressed in white, wearing a crown with stars in it.

John Dagg, Portage du Fort, P.Q.
George Dagg, Portage du Fort, P.Q.
William Eddes, Radsford, P.Q.
William H. Dagg, Port. du Fort.
Arthur Smart, Port. du Fort.
Charles A. Dagg, Port. du Fort.
Bruno Morrow, Port. du Fort.
Benjamin Smart, Shawville, P.Q.
William J. Dagg, Shawville, P.Q.
Robert J. Peever, Cobden, Ont.
Robert H. Lockhart, Port. du Fort.
John Fulford, Port. du Fort.
George H. Hodgins, Shawville.
Richard E. Dagg, Shawville.
George Blackwell, Haley's, Ont.
William Smart, Portage du Fort.
John J. Dagg, Portage du Fort."

Having secured this document, Woodcock felt he had had enough of the ghost for the time being. He left

the Dagg house about 10:30 P.M. and missed quite an emotional climax. The crowd stayed on after his departure and the voice took charge of the proceedings. It called out for someone to fetch two prominent local clergymen. They could not be found; but a Baptist minister, the Rev. Bell, was persuaded, rather against his will, to come to the house. After a brief and none too friendly parley with the voice, he attempted to exorcise it—whereupon the "spirit" burst into laughter and told him to stick to photography, which happened to be the minister's hobby!

After the withdrawal of Bell, the crowd took up hymn-singing, which the voice, changing its note again to one of sweetness and light, joined in and even took the lead. The singing went on for hours, with the crowd growing more and more agitated. The voice, by request, delayed its departure till three in the morning—at which hour it took a fond and sad farewell of Dinah and the two little children, promising, however, that it would appear to them in person some time next day.

Woodcock, spruced up by a night's rest, was back at the Daggs's on Monday to say good-bye and finish putting his notes in order. While he was there the three children rushed in to tell the artist that they had seen the ghost outside in the yard, and that he looked like an angel—or rather, the conventional picture of one, complete with gold crown, and stars. Needless to say, Mr. Woodcock, on going outside, could see nothing.

After the artist's return to Brockville, he paid a second visit to Clarendon, about a week later. On the way he met another visitor, Andrew Watson, an agent of the Royal Oil Company, of Toronto. Mr. Watson had been reading, with a curiosity that matched his skepticism, Woodcock's story in the press of what he had seen at Clarendon. He too determined to take a trip

to the spot and see if he could put two and two together.

Watson was a bit late in the field. He could only pick up hearsay accounts of the voice. First, he alighted from the train (accompanied by a friend) at Shawville on November 27th and interviewed the Rev. Bell, who had tried to exorcise the ghost. Mr. Bell declared that he had known the Dagg family for many years and had never known a word said against their character.

"Did the voice really speak," asked Watson, "on that Sunday evening while you were engaged in family worship?"

"Yes," replied the minister, "distinctly."

"What did you think of it?"

"I cannot tell."

Watson also called on the editor of the local paper, the Shawville *Equity*, who did not conceal his opinion that the Daggs were in some way practicing a fraud on the public, though how it was done he had no idea.

Next morning, the 28th, Watson drove out to Clarendon and visited the farm of Arthur Smart, at Portage du Fort, where a threshing bee was in progress. There he interviewed John J. Dagg and other members of the Smart family. Lastly, he walked over to the haunted house itself and quizzed Mrs. George Dagg. He was impressed by what she told him.

"Mrs. Dagg described what took place," he wrote afterwards in a newspaper, "in a manner that would convince any unprejudiced mind that she was not only sane and intelligent, but was one who would only believe what she could see. She showed us where the fires occurred, what panes of glass were broken, what beds were moved and sofas overturned. We cross-questioned her in every possible way, but without shaking

her testimony in the least. I went there to endeavor to find even the slightest reason that would convince me that this was a fraud from beginning to end. I could not do so; I could not even find a loophole. I was even mentally anxious to find someone who would show me proof that the Dagg family were unworthy of credence; but this I failed to find and there is now not the least doubt in my mind that the occurrences stated took place, as well as others not made public.

"The question is asked: 'Who is at the bottom of all this?' Some say it was Dinah, who has been acting a part all through, because nothing took place except when she was present. Well, I won't believe Dinah could overturn sofas, tables or beds in a second, or act the part of a ventriloquist for two months, while during the previous five years she was in the house she did not exhibit her power. Others may say, the Daggs. From what I have mentioned as to the reputation of the family, I cannot believe them capable of committing such a fraud, which, if discovered, might send them to the penitentiary; nor did I think the men, not members of the Dagg family, could be induced to accept the manifestations without reasonable proof.

"I have no theory to offer. The mystery still remains." And thus, apparently, it will remain until the end of time.

THE AMHERST MYSTERY

The years that I spent in Canada after the second world war as a reporter for a news service gave me ample opportunity to delve into more intriguing mysteries of the New World than the Daggs's poltergeist. And probably the most sensational of all was the unhappy experience of Miss Esther Cox—a psychical report that is almost without parallel in the annals of true ghost stories; and has long been regarded as one of Canada's best-known occult yarns.

Although it's almost a century now since the mystery started, the Nova Scotian town of Amherst is unlikely to forget its very own haunting. A series of paranormal manifestations and disturbances that are still furtively as well as openly discussed, analyzed and pondered upon today, they still baffle, confuse and intrigue . . . as one of the most investigated cases in psychical research.

It started in the summer, exactly ninety years ago in a little white painted house in Church Street, Amherst, where shoemaker Daniel Teed lived with his family and his two spinster sisters-in law, Jane and Esther Cox. Both girls were barely in their twenties and Jane was as pretty and gay as Esther was plain, moody and sulky. However, Esther was pleasant enough both in looks and in character when the need arose—

and this did indeed arise, when she fell in love with Bob McNeal, another shoemaker, who worked at the same factory as her brother-in-law, Daniel.

There were several premonitory symptoms of trouble in the Teed household. Bob was tall and handsome, with jet black hair and eyes and small moustache. He was considered a good workman, but an unsteady character. Daniel Teed was not too pleased to see Esther "walking out" with him. And then one August day the trouble started. Daniel kept a cow, from whose milk the household supply of butter was derived every week. For the past ten nights, complained Dan, someone had been surreptitiously milking his cow, and therefore diminishing its normal yield. Who could it be? No one knew for certain, but Esther was uncommonly fond of drinking milk. Perhaps it was a sign of guilt, or just nervousness on her part, that when she went down into the cellar that evening, to get herself a drink of buttermilk, she ran upstairs immediately screaming that a rat had run over her leg while she was down there. No one was sympathetic.

That night Esther was also worrying over Bob McNeal. She had a lurid dream which she related in full next morning to her sister Olive Teed. She dreamed that their cottage had suddenly changed color from yellow to green, and that all its inmates had been changed into bears that growled and glared at her with blood-red eyes. "While I was talking to you," she told Olive, "I heard a noise in the street, and on going to the door I saw hundreds of black bulls with blue eyes—very bright blue eyes—coming towards the house. Blood was dripping from their mouths, and their feet made fire come right out of the ground. On they came, roaring very loudly all the time, right straight for the house. They broke down the fence, I shut the front door, locked it and then ran to the

back door and fastened it. Then they all commenced to butt the house so violently that it nearly fell over. It shook so that I woke up and found that I had fallen out of bed."

Esther wanted to get hold of a good dream book, or visit a fortune teller at a neighboring Indian reserve, to interpret her dream. But Olive said this was wicked and likely to please the Devil.

"I shouldn't wonder," commented Esther obstinately, "if the Devil saw more of me than he has yet, before I die!"

A modern psychoanalyst could have told Esther quite a lot about her dream and its obviously sexual significance. Clearly a repressed desire of more than usual intensity was about to come to the surface and seek release.

On the evening of August 28th, after supper, Bob McNeal called at the Teed home to take Esther out. It was just before 8 P.M. and the weather was thundery. However, Bob was driving a two-seated open buggy, with a hood that could be raised in case of a shower. Esther climbed in, and they drove off together.

At 10 P.M., after dark, Esther arrived home, dishevelled, soaked to the skin, and distraught. Not till a month later did she tell her relatives exactly what had happened to her. But this was the story. Bob drove them to a small dark wood outside Amherst. He stopped his horse and began to argue with Esther—he wanted her to get out and go with him into the woods. She refused.

Then Bob had a fit of "emotional insanity." He leaped out of the buggy, felt in his coat pocket, and produced a large pistol. He pointed it at Esther, and ordered her to get out, or take the consequences. Esther did not lack courage. She told Bob not to be a fool, to put away his pistol and get back into the bug-

gy and put up the cover to keep off the rain, which had just started.

Bob burst out into a stream of profanity and pointed the pistol at the girl again. This time it really looked as if he might fire; Esther was terrified. But at the critical moment, a rumble of wheels was heard in the distance. Bob hesitated, then thought better of his folly. Sullenly he lowered his weapon, then climbed into the driver's seat and drove off at breakneck speed towards the village. Perhaps to punish Esther he did not raise the hood to protect her from the rain. Also he drove the buggy so wildly they were nearly upset. After letting her down at her door, he departed without a word, and that night left Amherst, evidently ashamed of his behavior and alarmed at what might be the consequences of an attempted rape. Esther ran indoors and without a word to anyone, went to bed and cried herself to sleep.

The next four days were very uncomfortable. Esther was sleepless, speechless and red-eyed—obviously cherishing a secret sorrow, which she would not impart even to her sister Jane, whose bed she shared. The rest of the Teed family could only surmise, without regret, that Esther must have quarreled with her young man. It must be serious, because since that night Bob had not shown up for work at the factory.

On September 4th, the real drama began. It was a damp, misty, unpleasant evening. Everyone in the cottage, including the two girls, went early to bed. Jane found Esther already in bed and as usual sobbing. When she asked what was the matter, Esther reminded her that it was exactly a week since she last went riding with Bob. Jane told her sister not to be silly; she was driving herself crazy with her worry over the worthless Bob. Then Jane blew out the lamp, leaving

the room in darkness. For fifteen minutes the sisters lay in bed side by side without speaking.

Suddenly Esther gave a scream and jumped out of bed. "There's a mouse under the bedclothes! I felt it move!"

Jane helped Esther make a search, but they could see no mouse. However, something curious was going on, for Jane remarked: "If there really is one, it can't do us any harm. See, it is inside the mattress! Look, how the straw is being moved about. The mouse has gotten inside, and can't get out."

They listened and watched for several minutes without noticing any further movement in the straw. Finally they pulled up the bedclothes and went to sleep. There was no further disturbance.

However, next night, they thought they could again hear something moving—this time under the bed. They got up, lit the lamp, and made an examination. They could hear a rustling noise coming from a green cardboard box filled with patchwork that stood under the bed. Thinking this contained the mouse, they took the box out and stood it in the middle of the room. To their amazement it suddenly jumped about a foot in the air, and fell over on its side. Jane picked the box up and stood it, right side up, in its old position. It jumped again.

Both girls, thoroughly frightened, began screaming for help. Daniel Teed, from the next room, heard them, slipped on a pair of pants, and came in to see what was the matter. When he heard their story, he gave a laugh and said they must have been dreaming. He pushed the box back under the bed with his foot, and told them to go to sleep at once. Next morning, when they repeated their story, it was received by the family as a joke.

That evening, September 6th, Esther complained of

feeling unwell and feverish, and retired early to bed at halfpast eight. Jane followed her at ten. Fifteen minutes later, after lights-out, Esther sprang out of bed dragging all the bedclothes with her, and stood in the middle of the room, calling out:

"Wake up, Jane, I'm dying!"

Naturally Jane supposed her sister had a nightmare. But when she lighted the lamp, she was horrified at Esther's appearance. Her face had turned the color of beetroot, her eyes were popping out of her head, her short hair was almost standing on end, and her hands were gripping the back of a chair so tightly that the fingernails dented the soft wood. Jane yelled for help and Olive came in, followed by Daniel and two boarders.

The color had now ebbed from the girl's face; she turned pale and seemed to grow weak. Assisted to the bed, she sat there a few moments, then jumped to her feet again and said she felt like she was bursting in pieces. Pushed once more into bed and covered up, she complained she was swelling up. Daniel, looking at her, had to admit something was happening.

"Why!" he remarked, her face and hands are swelling."

Esther was burning hot to touch, and alternately flushing red and white. Her whole body seemed to be swelling, and she began screaming with pain and grinding her teeth, as if in a fit. Suddenly a loud report, like a clap of thunder, was heard: Olive Teed, thinking it came from outside, ran into the bedroom where her two boys lay, but found they were sleeping peacefully. The noise was confined to Esther's bedroom.

She returned in time to hear three more reports, like gunshots that seemed to come from under Esther's bed. They were loud enough to make the room vibrate.

Then they noticed Esther. The swelling had disappeared—deflated like a punctured football. She had resumed her normal appearance, and sunk into a deep slumber. After some further talk, the members of the family dispersed and went back to bed, leaving Jane to watch over her sister. Nothing further occurred that night. Next day Esther was apparently normal, except for loss of appetite. So they all agreed among themselves to say nothing about the trouble to anyone outside the house.

Esther's next attack came on September 9th, just when she was getting into bed. Jane advised her sister to lie still, but after five minutes all the bedclothes flew off by themselves and settled in a heap in the far corner of the room. They could see them going, by the light of the lamp which was still burning on a side table. Both girls screamed and Jane fell in a dead faint.

Again the family ran in, to find Esther swollen up as she had been in the earlier attack. Olive replaced the bedclothes, but they refused to stay on the bed, and again flew off into the corner of the room. Next a pillow under Esther's head sailed up into the air and struck John Teed in the face, thoroughly frightening him. He walked out of the room, saying he had had enough—and could not be induced to return.

Everyone else, including Jane, who had now come to, sat on the edge of the bed to keep the clothes down. While they waited, a succession of loud reports, like pistol shots, was heard, apparently coming from under the bed. Again Esther seemed to relax and deflate. In a few minutes she became normal and fell asleep, enabling her relatives to go back to finish their interrupted night's rest.

Next day, Daniel Teed decided to call in a medical man, Dr. Caritte. He arrived at ten o'clock in the eve-

ning, one hour after Esther had retired to bed. He felt her pulse, looked at her tongue and observed that she was suffering from nervous excitement, due to a shock of some kind. Hardly had these words come out of his mouth than Esther's pillow started playing antics. One corner stayed under her head; the rest of the pillow straightened out as if inflated with air, collapsed, and then reinflated itself. John Teed standing by, tried to catch half of it, but it pulled itself away from his grasp as if it was alive.

The doctor got to his feet. At once a series of sharp raps sounded, and followed him across the floor as he walked about the room. A minute later, the bedclothes flew off, and while they were being put back, a new phenomenon appeared. All heard a scratching noise on the wall above Esther's bed. Looking up at it, they saw writing forming there, the characters being traced without any visible hand. In a minute or so a whole sentence was completed. It ran: "Esther Cox, you are mine to kill."

Before they could recover from their astonishment, a large piece of plaster flew off the wall (not near the writing) and fell at Dr. Caritte's feet. He was at this moment standing in the door of the bedroom, so the plaster had to turn a corner to reach him! He picked it up and placed it on a chair, whereupon the raps and poundings began again and continued till midnight. All this time Esther lay on her bed, apparently as frightened as the rest of the family at what was happening.

Dr. Caritte, of course, was utterly at a loss to account for the phenomena he had witnessed. However, he agreed that they were directly connected with Esther's nervous excitement, and said he would go home and return in the morning with a strong sedative and other medicines.

On September 12th, Dr. Caritte visited the Teed house twice. On his second visit, in the evening, he injected morphia into Esther, who was still complaining of her nerves and of what she called "electric currents" that were passing through her body. As soon as he administered the drug, the reports began again, louder and more frequent than on the previous night. The noises seemed to go outside the room and ascend on to the roof of the house. Thinking they might be due to some external cause, the doctor went out into the little yard in front of the cottage. It was a moonlit night, and no one was about. But he could still hear the noises, which sounded exactly as though someone was pounding on the roof shingles with a sledgehammer. When Caritte left, shortly after midnight, they were still going on, and he could hear them distinctly as he went off down the street.

Presumably Dr. Caritte's visits could not be kept a secret. Soon it was noised abroad throughout Amherst that strange things were happening at the Teeds's. Passersby declared that, like Dr. Caritte, they could hear the knockings from the street. These were now incessant, and Esther seemed to derive physical relief from their occurrences.

The manifestations had continued for three weeks, with Dr. Caritte calling thrice a day but unable to help Esther, when a new stage in their development was reached. One night she threw her arms above her head, was seized by a spasm, became rigid and fell into a cataleptic trance. In this state she began to talk, and told the full story of what had taken place between herself and Bob McNeal on the night of the attempted assault. It was the first time the family had heard it, and when she came to her senses, they repeated what she had said, and Esther admitted its truth.

Olive remarked that it must be Bob that was responsible for Esther's trouble. At once three loud raps were heard on the bedroom wall. Jane then suggested that whatever was making the noises appeared to understand what they were saying. This remark too was followed by three raps.

Dr. Caritte now began to ask the "spirit" questions, to which the raps provided the answer. A simple code was used: one rap was taken to mean "No;" two raps "No answer" or "Doubtful;" three raps "Yes." The spirit answered correctly such simple questions as, how many people were in the room?

All Dr. Caritte's efforts to arrive at some explanation of the phenomena were useless. But other callers at the house produced a variety of theories. For instance, Dr. Edwin Clay, a Baptist clergyman, declared that Esther had become a human electric battery. He lectured and preached on the subject, and defended Esther in the pulpit against the criticisms of another minister, Dr. Nathan Tucker, who maintained that she was either a mesmerist or a fraud.

The Teeds's own minister, Rev. A. Temple, came alone to see what was the matter with his parishioners. He was treated to a special manifestation—a bucket of cold water standing on the kitchen table became agitated and appeared to boil, in Esther's presence.

The flock of callers became uncomfortably pressing, especially as some were rude enough to call Esther a sham, and to urge that she be given a good whipping! Daniel Teed, who was far from sympathetic with his sister-in-law, appealed for police protection to keep his house from becoming a public resort.

However, the pressure eased itself, for natural causes. In December, Esther developed an infectious sore throat, which was pronounced to be diphtheria. This kept the visitors away, and likewise the manifestations,

which completely ceased during her two weeks' illness. Upon recovery, she was sent away to convalesce at the home of another married sister, Mrs. Snowden at Sackville, N.B. Again, there were no phenomena.

Esther returned home to the Teeds's in January, 1879, and to give her a fresh start, she and Jane were moved into another bedroom. But they had hardly settled in before the manifestations began again—in a new and much more alarming form. One night, when the two girls were in bed, Esther told her sister she could hear a voice warning her that the house would shortly be set on fire—by a ghost! Naturally Jane thought this was a joke, and in this spirit passed the story on to Daniel and Olive Teed. Next morning the members of the household were laughing together over the prophecy, when suddenly a lighted match was seen to fall, apparently from the ceiling, onto the bed. The inflammable linen began to smolder, and only Jane's quick presence of mind put the fire out before it could spread.

During the next ten minutes quite a rain of lighted matches—eight or ten in all—fell in all parts of the room, but were caught and extinguished before they could do any harm. Nothing more happened the rest of that day; but after dark the rappings and knockings were heard—and on applying the code that Dr. Caritte had devised months earlier, the family learned that, yes, their house was to be set on fire. Five minutes later, a dress that had been hanging on a nail near the bedroom door was found to have transferred itself mysteriously to under Esther's bed, where it had become ignited. Once more the blaze was caught in time and put out.

But Dan and Olive were now thoroughly alarmed. Rappings were one thing—fires quite another. They kept anxious watch over every part of their house for the

next three days, and were somewhat relieved when no more trouble occurred. Then, just as their vigilance began to relax, the fire demon caught them off guard. While churning butter in her kitchen, Olive smelled smoke; it appeared to be coming from the cellar. At this time Esther was sitting in the dining room, and had been there for the past hour, before which she had been in the kitchen helping Olive to wash dishes.

Mrs. Teed now ran downstairs with a bucket of water, with Esther following behind her. They found in the far corner of the cellar a barrel of blazing wood shavings, which refused to be put out by the water. The two women, half choked by the smoke, ran upstairs and out of the house yelling "Fire" at the top of their voices. Luckily they met a passing stranger who ran in and with great presence of mind picked up a door mat and beat out the flames in the cellar, then walked off without leaving his name.

When the village fire marshals heard of the fire, they were scared and angry. They were convinced that Esther had done the deed herself, and pointed out that if Dan's house caught fire and a wind was blowing, half of Amherst would be burned down.

As the rappings and fires continued off and on in the next week, Daniel Teed was advised to send his sister-in-law away from his house. A neighbor, John W. White, offered to take her in, on condition that she did some housework for him. For two weeks the plan worked well, and there were no manifestations anywhere. Then, the third week, they began again at White's house, though at first in a minor form, with a scrubbing brush flying from Esther's hand as she worked, and later returning from the ceiling to hit her on the head.

Recognizing the sign of trouble, John White tried to forestall its development by giving Esther work

outside his home. He took her every day to work in a restaurant that he owned in the main street in Amherst. Because some people thought Esther's trouble was due to electrical discharges, he insisted that she insulate herself from contact with the ground by wearing thin glass soles inside her shoes. These however she soon discarded, on the grounds that they made her head ache and her nose bleed!

White's restaurant was now plagued with various disturbances. One day the door of a large kitchen stove refused to stay shut and even when braced by White with an axehandle, kept flying open and finally jumped off its hinges. This happened in the presence of White's friend, W. H. Rogers, Inspector of Fisheries for Nova Scotia.

Metal objects seemed to have a special attraction towards the girl. A little boy's claspknife flew from his hand and stabbed Esther in the back, drawing blood. And three large iron spikes, laid in Esther's lap by some curious visitors, grew too hot to be handled with comfort, and then suddenly jumped out of her lap to a distance of twenty feet.

The furniture in the restaurant was moved about in broad daylight without visible agency. A fifty-pound box was moved fifteen feet. The room was filled with loud knockings that could be heard by the patrons of the restaurant and even out in the street. One of the witnesses to this was Albert Black, Editor of the Amherst *Gazette*.

Not unnaturally, John White grew tired of these antics, and sent Esther back home. Daniel determined to send her out of town. A kind-hearted stranger, Captain James Beck, opportunely invited the girl to come and stay with him and his wife at St. John, N.B. While she was a guest in their house, for three weeks during March, 1879, several medical men and so-called

"scientists" called to investigate her phenomena. They were largely regaled by her with stories of various ghosts that had appeared to her, threatening mischief of one kind and another.

The chief of these ghosts were named "Peter Cox," "Maggie Fisher" and "Bob Nickle." The last-named—an obvious projection of the memory of the troublesome Bob McNeal—was the most vicious and destructive of the three. He specialized in threatening Esther with fires and stabbings.

After her stay with the Becks, Esther enjoyed another spell of hospitality, with Mr. and Mrs. Van Ambergh, who lived on a farm three miles from Amherst. Here she stopped eight weeks, in peace and calm, apparently free from the attentions of the persistent ghosts.

Shortly before midsummer, she was well enough to return home to the Teeds's, apparently "cured." But, as luck would have it, she had hardly settled down again before a new phase of her career opened up.

On June 21st, 1879, a visitor arrived at the Teed cottage. He had been previously corresponding with Daniel and Olive, and had obtained their permission to come and stay as a paying guest, for the purpose of observing Esther and her manifestations at first hand. His name was Walter Hubbell, and by profession he was an actor and vaudeville magician. He had just finished a theatrical tour of Newfoundland, and was now "resting." Exactly what his motives were in coming to Amherst has never been made quite clear. Curiosity, a holiday, the prospect of writing a book, or even the hope of making some money out of Esther, all seem to have entered into the picture.

Hubbell's first day at the Teeds's was exciting enough. Before he had been in the place five minutes his umbrella, left by him in a corner of the dining room,

was thrown over his head a distance of fifteen feet—by whom, he did not see. At the same instant, a large carving knife appeared to project itself over Esther's head in his direction, and fell on the floor near him. A little later his satchel was thrown ten feet, and a chair slid over the floor and rammed the one he was sitting on, almost knocking him off it. Then the chairs, in whatever room he entered, began falling over on their sides. Seven chairs in one room performed this antic—whereupon Esther informed him that this was a sign of his unpopularity with the ghosts. Perhaps they feared the presence of a "skeptic."

During midday dinner raps began to be heard on the table. Hubbell had already learned the code, so he carried on a conversation with the spirits by its means. They told him correctly the number engraved on his watch, the dates of coins in his pocket. Then they beat time on the table while he whistled the well-known tune "Yankee Doodle."

After dinner Hubbell said he would take a nap. He lay down on a sofa and pretended to go to sleep. Soon Esther came in to look for a newspaper. As Hubbell watched her out of the corner of one eye, a large glass paperweight, weighing at least a pound, rose from a shelf in the far corner of the room where it had been reposing, whizzed through the air about fifteen feet, struck the arm of the sofa where Hubbell lay, rebounded onto a chair, spun around and stopped still.

The actor was so intrigued he woke up and asked Esther to stay in the room. At this point her small nephew, George, came in and sat down in his sister's lap, asking her to sing to him. While she did so, one of the child's shoes flew up and struck him on the head.

Next day, Sunday, there were no manifestations; but on the Monday they were more prolific than ever. At breakfast a china sugar bowl disappeared; ten minutes

later it fell from the ceiling. Several mats were pitched about the room. A flowerpot with a plant in bloom and a can full of water were brought from their respective places in the bay window and kitchen and set down on the parlor floor, side by side—without visible human agency. In the afternoon a large inkstand and two bottles were thrown at Hubbell, a fire was started upstairs, and all the chairs in the parlor were piled in a heap and then upset with a crash when no one was near.

On Tuesday new phenomena occurred. Noises were heard under tables, imitating the sawing of wood or drumming on a washboard. Several knives were thrown at Hubbell. Esther announced she was being plagued by six ghosts, some of whom began to stick pins in her. These pins seemed to come from nowhere, and Hubbell gallantly went to work to pull them out—thirty in all, from different parts of the girl's body. On the same day he saw a chair follow Esther downstairs from her bedroom, though the only other person in the house at the moment, Mrs. Teed, was in the kitchen.

Towards the end of June the fire epidemic revived—there were forty-five in one day, none of them serious. A small trumpet was sounded all over the house, and later found lying in one of the rooms. It was of German silver, and had never been seen before in Amherst.

The ghosts continued to be both mischievous and active. One day when Esther went to call on the Rev. Temple, and ask him to pray with her, the most virulent of the ghosts (Bob Nickle) punished her on her return home by cutting her head open with an old bone from the yard, and stabbing her face with a dinner fork. Small objects—such as shoes, stockings, knives and coins—continually vanished and suddenly turned up, or rather, fell down, mysteriously from ceilings.

About this time Hubbell disclosed what looks like an ulterior motive for his prolonged visit to Amherst. He suggested that Esther's "gifts," which now much resembled those of spiritualist mediums, could be commercialized. Perhaps the lure of vaudeville was too strong for him. At any rate he hired a public hall and invited the people of Amherst to buy tickets to see Esther produce some of her phenomena on the stage. But the experiment was a fiasco. Crowds filled the hall, and Esther duly appeared—but the ghosts took a night off. No supernormal manifestations of any kind took place. The result was great dissatisfaction among the audience, which insisted on the return of its money.

This was a disappointment for Hubbell. But for Daniel Teed it was the end. By July, 1879, his whole household was sick and tired of the persecution it had undergone. The two boarders, Cox and Taylor, had left the house in disgust. The cottage was in semi-ruin, with battered furniture, spoiled food, damaged walls, smashed crockery, and bent cutlery. Daniel had had enough of his "paying guest," and likewise of his sister-in-law.

He rid himself of both at once, by arranging to send Esther on a second visit to the hospitable Van Amberghs. There in August Hubbell visited her for the last time, and found her serene and free from the molestations that had afflicted her. Then he retired to St. John, to put together his copious notes and publish the book which was to be his sole claim to remembrance by posterity.

In November he wrote to the Teeds inquiring after Esther's health, and received a sad shock. On behalf of the family, Jane wrote to break the sad news: "She is in jail. She has been there for a week, and has to stay for four months. Oh Mr. Hubbell, it is hard for

her, and much harder for me, for I think I feel it more than she does. I cannot hold my head up when I go out."

After her stay with the Van Amberghs, Esther had secured a job as a servant on a neighboring farm, owned by people named Davidson. But the Van Amberghs soon missed various articles of clothing, which turned up in a barn belonging to the Davidsons. Esther was accused of taking them there, but before the theft could be proved, the barn took fire and burned to the ground. As Esther was the last person seen in or near the place, she was prosecuted for arson, and convicted. This was the melancholy end of her "manifestations."

In the meantime Hubbell was busy writing his book, which was published in St. John, New Brunswick, in the latter part of 1879. It was an instant success, and was republished in the United States. Between 1879 and 1916 it went into ten editions and sold 55,000 copies—surely a record for a "true" ghost story. The later editions were much longer than the earlier, as Hubbell added more and more material taken from his notes.

The story of Esther Cox, as we know it, we owe primarily to Hubbell's writings, both in his book and in the Amherst *Gazette* and other newspapers. We have also one fairly important piece of secondary evidence, and one important critical analysis. In 1907 the well-known American psychical researcher, Hereward Carrington, visited Windsor, Nova Scotia, to investigate privately a story of poltergeist disturbances in that city. He followed this with a visit to Amherst, where he traced and interviewed as many as he could of the surviving protagonists of the Amherst Mystery. Dr. Caritte, unfortunately, was dead; but Mr. Carrington was able to meet Esther Cox herself, Mrs. Olive Teed, her elder

sister, and Mr. Davidson, the owner of the burned-down barn.

Esther had by this time married, but not too happily. She was living in squalid surroundings, and was sullen and uncooperative, professing not to remember what had taken place so long ago. Her husband offered to get her to talk if Carrington would produce $100; but he naturally considered that any statement made under these conditions would be worth little.

Mrs. Olive Teed was more communicative. She testified to the general correctness of Hubbell's narrative, although she said he had exaggerated and embellished some of the material. Anyone who reads the book will see what she meant. Hubbell records verbatim conversations of which he can only have been told the gist. His account is evidently colored to increase its dramatic effect. But this does not mean it is untrue.

Mrs. Teed added one or two particulars out of her own memory, including the story of a heavy chair which, while Esther was lying in bed, with her door open across the passage into Mrs. Teed's room, sailed out through this door, turned a corner on the landing, and slowly and deliberately sailed down to the foot of the stairs. Mrs. Teed also showed Carrington the six chairs that had been piled up and upset by the ghost. They still bore the dents and marks of their fall.

Mr. Davidson, in spite of the loss of his barn, seemed also to believe in the genuineness of at least some of Esther's manifestations. He made the remark that "I have often watched her to find out how she came downstairs, she seeming to fly."

In 1918 Dr. Walter F. Prince published, in the Proceedings of the American Society for Psychical Research, a long critical study of the Amherst Mystery. He had no firsthand evidence of his own to contribute,

but he ruthlessly complained that Hubbell was unscientific in his investigations, and that the accounts given by the witnesses he quoted were too vague and too few to be relied upon. Prince pointed out that the most extraordinary phenomena occurred before Hubbell arrived on the scene, yet were recorded by him in his book with even greater wealth of detail than those he witnessed himself. He also called attention to several inconsistencies in Hubbell's narrative, and to discrepancies between the journal that he kept while the manifestations were going on and the book that he wrote after they were over.

The facts as revealed in both these sources indicate, first, that Esther was a hysterical and abnormal individual, and second, that at least during part of the time, she committed criminal or fraudulent acts (e.g. theft and arson). In the third place, some of the alleged phenomena—such as the writing on the bedroom wall "Esther, you are mine to kill"—pass all bounds of credibility. On the other hand, she can hardly have been merely a liar and trickster, since from many of the manifestations she herself was the chief sufferer.

After all, she was the one who lost sleep, who swelled up, who was attacked and wounded by the ghosts, and whose house was set on fire.

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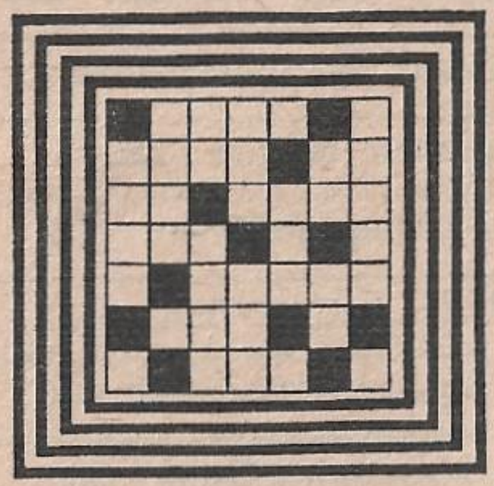

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